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THE EYE

INDEPENDENT

Thursday 7 May 1998 45p (IR 50p) No 3,604

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

Secret plans reveal plot behind coup

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KABBAH

A memo outlining terms for British mercenaries to plan Sierra Leone coup

By Fran Abrams
and Andrew Buncombe

THE *Independent* can today reveal the secret negotiations that ended with British mercenaries helping to overthrow the Sierra Leone regime in a bloody counter coup.

As government embarrassment grew over Foreign Office involvement in the plot, Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, yesterday promised an independent inquiry into the claims that British officials covertly gave approval to the mercenaries.

The documents show the full extent of the planning for the coup in a series of exchanges between the exiled government of Sierra Leone, an arms dealer wanted for alleged money laundering and the former Army officer Lieutenant-Colonel Tim Spicer, head of Sandline International Ltd, who describes himself as "military consultants". The negotiations, conducted by faxed letters and cellular phones, stretched from Canada to the West African state of Guinea.

The documents also show the costs involved in planning an operation to overthrow the regime. In one letter, Lt-Col Spicer explains that one week's consultancy will cost \$60,000 (£35,000). He says that additional expenses to make a presentation of the plan in Africa will cost \$10,000.

"You asked for assistance with a military appreciation of the credible options," he says, "we are certainly able to assist."

The Foreign Secretary yesterday promised the investigation amid growing evidence

that Foreign Office staff knew mercenaries were engaged to reinstate Sierra Leone's elected president, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, in breach of a United Nations arms embargo.

Mr Cook was forced to the despatch box to respond to the allegations after the Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, accepted an emergency question from the Opposition. He said no ministerial approval had ever been given for the activities of Sandline International Ltd.

"I can assure the House that we have not, and we will not, condone any breach of international law," he said.

Inside

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It was "a matter of deep concern" that his fellow minister Tony Lloyd had been ill-informed by his officials, Mr Cook added. Mr Lloyd answered a Parliamentary debate on the issue in March, two days after a Customs and Excise investigation was launched into Sandline's activities, but knew nothing about the inquiry at the time.

Clearly laying the blame on officials, Mr Cook told the House: "I do believe that it is unsatisfactory that he was put up to the despatch box in Parliament to speak to the House without being informed."

Inquiries by *The Independent* have established that plans to organise a counter-coup to re-

instate President Kabbah, ended in Guinea, began as early as July 1997 - two months after he was ousted by rebel forces headed by Johnny Paul Koroma. He was finally reinstated with the help of neighbouring governments and arms and training supplied by Sandline, in February 1998.

Customs and Excise are investigating the shipment of arms by Sandline and the possible involvement of the British authorities, in particular the High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, Peter Penfold. *The Independent* revealed yesterday that Sandline had met FCO officials just weeks before it shipped 30 tons of arms to pro-Kabbah forces.

Mr Cook said an independent figure would be called in to investigate once the Customs and Excise inquiry and any subsequent prosecution were complete.

Some Africa-watchers expressed doubts about Mr Kabbah's human rights record. Dr Abdel Fatah Musah, a consultant to the British American Security Information Council, a non-governmental organisation concerned with arms dealing, said 2,000 opponents of Mr Kabbah had been jailed since his return and 60 faced death sentences.

"The restoration of the Kabbah regime has not in any way advanced the cause of democracy in Sierra Leone. Opponents of the regime are being rounded up and reports filtering out indicate instances of serious human rights violations," he said. "The credibility of the ethical UK foreign policy and the proposed EU code of conduct could be seriously undermined by the scandal."

25 die, 70 missing, in Italian mudslides



A fireman rescues a child in the village of Sarno, near Salerno in southern Italy

By Anne Hanley
in Rome

THE Italian government declared a state of emergency after torrents of mud and water unleashed by two days of incessant rain engulfed hundreds of homes in the southern Italian region of Campania yesterday, killing at least 25 people.

Rivers of mud burst into town centres, tearing apart

houses and bridges, swallowing cars and sending panicked residents fleeing in the heavily populated area south of Naples.

A 34-year-old woman and her three children were killed when the mud swept through their home in Bracigliano, dragging them downstream for half a mile. The children's father escaped by climbing on to the roof.

In the town of Quindici, the mudslide killed the former mayor,

Oiga Santuzello, who in the 1990s led a campaign against the powerful organised crime syndicate in the region, the Camorra. Rescue services said at least 70 more people were still missing. Environmentalists yesterday blamed bad land management for the tragedy. "This disaster was totally predictable," said Alberto Fiorillo, a spokesman for the Legambiente environmental group.

Further report, page 15

'Designer baby' fears after 50 screened births

By Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

MORE than 50 children have been born in Britain after being screened for genetic defects in what critics warn could be the first step towards the creation of designer babies.

The figures were disclosed by Professor Lord Winston, the test tube baby pioneer, whose clinic at Hammersmith hospital, London, is one of four in the country permitted to carry out the work by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority.

The authority is preparing a consultation paper on the technique, called pre-implantation diagnosis, in which embryos are selected to be free of genetic defects before being replaced in the womb, following concerns expressed by pro-life groups that scientists are "meddling in human evolution".

A spokesman for the authority said yesterday: "This is one of the biggest issues we are dealing with. The implications are enormous."

Lord Winston said the technique of pre-implantation diagnosis was the last hope for desperate parents who had suffered repeated miscarriages or seen previous children die. The technique has so far been used in a handful of fatal disorders caused by single genes including cystic fibrosis, Duchenne's muscular dystrophy and Tay-Sachs disease. A test for the breast cancer gene, BrCa1, that gives women who inherit it an 80-90 per cent chance of developing the disease, was likely to be the next development, he said.

However, he dismissed suggestions that advances in the technique would usher in a

new era of designer babies and trigger demand from parents for socially desirable characteristics in their children.

Speaking at a meeting organised by the Centre for Bioethics and Public Policy, which has warned that pre-implantation diagnosis could be the start of a slippery slope towards eugenics and the quality control of children, he said: "I have no doubt that its uses will be extended but in a limited way. In spite of the exaggerated claims made for it, pre-implantation diagnosis seems to me a relatively insignificant technology. It is of limited value for a small number of parents but those parents are desperately deserving of something better than the alternatives."

Parents carrying a gene for one of the rare disorders currently faced an appalling choice between abortion, taking a "Russian roulette" style chance on having an affected baby or remaining childless.

Dr David King, editor of *Genetics News*, predicted that developments in the technology over the next decade would extend the availability of genetic testing and make it possible without the invasive procedures involved in extracting eggs and replacing embryos. Even though most human characteristics were controlled by multiple genes, sophisticated techniques of embryo selection could increase the chances of having a healthy baby.

"We will begin to hear that sex is for fun but having children is a serious matter which must not be left to chance. We will be told that children have a right to the best genetic chance in life," he said.

Sinn Fein backs Ulster peace

By David McKittrick
Ireland Correspondent

THE leaderships of Sinn Fein and the IRA have taken a momentous decision for republicans: to work the Good Friday agreement and allow their members to take their seats in the new Belfast assembly.

With Tony Blair and John Major visiting Belfast yesterday in a unique joint venture aimed at promoting the agreement, the drive is now on for a substantial Yes vote in the 22 May referendum.

crendums designed to endorse the accord.

Sinn Fein's *ard-chomhairle* (executive committee) will ask a special conference, due on Sunday, to drop the decades-old stipulation in its constitution against members taking seats in a "partitionist" Belfast institution.

It is believed the IRA has approved the move in a decision thought to have been taken at an IRA convention in the Irish Republic last month. A two-thirds majority is required at the conference, though with IRA and Sinn Fein leaders in favour, the result is in little doubt.

The historic nature of the move in republican terms can be seen in the fact that both the Provisional IRA and Provisional Sinn Fein were formed in 1969 by dissidents who left the

main organisation, in part because of plans to drop traditional abstentionism.

Meeting on Tuesday, the Sinn Fein executive, gave qualified approval to the Good Friday agreement, deciding to propose changes to the party's constitution and to call for yes votes in both referendums. In a statement to be placed before the conference, the executive said while the Good Friday document did not far as far as it would have liked, it heralded major change, weakened the union and was all-Ireland in character.

Saying a transitional process could provide a pragmatic route to Irish independence it added: "It is another staging post on the road to a peace settlement." It said that in some areas the proposed new north-south council

"represents effectively the exercise of joint authority".

The republican stance drew a guarded public welcome in London and Dublin, although privately both governments will be pleased. The move, while highly sensitive in republican terms, reflects the fact that nationalist approval for the accord is close to unanimous.

A claim by Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble that the IRA intended to shortly decommission a token amount of weaponry was dismissed by Sinn Fein as "a flight of fancy which is not based on reality." Mr Trimble added: "The important thing is whether they are going to make it clear that their terrorist campaign is over and that they are going to have a genuine peace."

Historic union, page 2

England captain on kicking charge

By Glenn Moore
Football Correspondent

ALAN SHEARER last night found that being England's captain and talisman in World Cup year did not put him above the laws of the Football Association.

The Newcastle United centre-forward was charged with misconduct for allegedly kicking another player in the head. However, Shearer will not miss any World Cup matches if he is found guilty by an FA commission of the assault on Neil Lennon of Leicester City, eight days ago, nor will the footballer miss the FA Cup final against Arsenal on 16 May.

The decision to charge Shearer was taken by Graham



Shearer: Misconduct charge

Kelly, the chief executive of the FA, after studying video evidence of the incident. In it Shearer appears to kick Lennon, who is on the ground. Full story, Sport, page 32

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End of a dynasty as the final Sainsbury checks out



Transformation: The Sainsbury supermarket dynasty in 1969 and (right) the stores' humble origins in Drury Lane in London

By Nigel Cope
Associate City Editor

LORD SAINSBURY of Turville, chairman of the Sainsbury's supermarket chain, signalled the end of an era yesterday with the surprise announcement that he is to retire from the business in September. With no other family members left in the company it will be the first time the Sainsbury's family has relinquished control of the supermarket empire in its 130-year history.

Lord Sainsbury, 58, is one of Britain's richest men with a wealth estimated at over £3bn. He was the sixth family member to run Sainsbury's since its started as a dairy shop in London's Drury Lane in 1869.

A keen supporter and financial backer of Tony Blair's Labour Party, he plans to devote himself to a career as a working peer. He will chair the new University for Industry, a government initiative designed to improve the skills of teenagers who leave school and do not attend further education.

Looking relaxed and cheerful Lord Sainsbury said yesterday: "It is a historic moment and in some ways a sad one. But of course it was also inevitable. Most people expected that there would be a 10-15 year gap after me before the next family member might have been ready."

On his new life in politics, he said: "It has been no secret that there are two things in my life, business and politics. The Blair government represents everything I have always wanted from British politics."

Lord Sainsbury is a recent convert to Labour after a long allegiance to the centre left Social Democrat party, which eventually merged with the Liberals to form the Liberal Democrats.

He announced in 1995 that he would vote for Labour under the leadership of Tony Blair and has written pamphlets for left-wing think tanks the Fabian Society and the Public Policy Centre.

Lord Sainsbury will hand over the running of the business to Dino Adriano, chief executive who has worked for the company for 20 years. Lord Sainsbury's cousin Tim Sainsbury will remain on the board as a non-executive director for a couple of years but will then depart too. Lord Sainsbury said the family intend to retain their near-40 per cent shareholding in the business.

Educated at Eton, Cambridge and the University of Columbia in New York, David Sainsbury was groomed to lead the business.

He joined in 1963 at the age of 23 and spent 17 years as finance director before becoming chairman in 1992. He did not always appear comfortable in the role which some say was more a duty for him than a pleasure.

His tenure in the top job led to mixed results. During his reign the business expanded further into America and bought Texas Homecare the DIY chain. But the supermarket business lost its way and was overtaken by a resurgent Tesco.

Food for politics, page 22



Liquid asset: Lord Sainsbury, groomed for the role of chairman of the family group, wants to concentrate on his political career. The Blair government 'is everything I have wanted from British politics'

Harrison tells court of Beatles 'junk'

By David Lister
Arts News Editor

THE High Court was warned yesterday against "experts who wallow in Beatle trivia." It was "junk" said the man giving evidence - former Beatle George Harrison.

Harrison, 54, donned reading spectacles to pore over large bundles of court documents as he gave evidence to stop an amateur recording of the group made at the beginning of their fame 36 years ago.

"Unlike the experts who wallow in Beatle trivia I spend a lot of time getting the junk out of my mind through meditation so I don't know or remember - I don't want to know or remember - every last detail because it was trivial pursuit," he said at one point.

Mr Harrison, Ringo Starr, Sir Paul McCartney and Yoko Ono, who is executrix of John Lennon's will, are asking a High Court judge to ban sales of a CD produced from the recording made at The Star Club in Hamburg in 1962.

In his evidence Mr Harrison told of the "wild early" days which involved "a lot of teenagers getting drunk playing rock'n'roll." He said: "That's how it was. It was just a wild thing."

The ex-Beatles and Yoko want the original tape at the centre of the case, or proof that it has been destroyed. It was made by Edward Taylor, leader of obscure Sixties band King Size Taylor and The Dominoes, on his own reel-to-reel machine when he was playing a double bill with the Beatles.

Mark Platts Mills QC, representing the Beatles, told Mr Justice Neuberger at the start of the case that there had been "various attempts to exploit" the tape by people associated with the defendants. Lingasong Music Ltd, of Waltham Abbey, Essex.

Lingasong is claiming that John Lennon, who was shot dead in 1980, gave his verbal consent to the recording, but the other group members say they did not even know it was being made.

Mr Harrison said that Ted Taylor was not a close friend. "He was a leader of another one of the groups. In those days, everyone was friendly to one another but only saw one another if they happened to play the same club at the same time."

Harrison then went on to talk candidly about The Beatles' early days. He said that Lennon was "like the loudest of us" and the eldest - before Ringo joined. "But we had a democratic thing going between us. Everyone in the band had to agree with everything that was done."

Harrison said the record at the centre of the case was the "crummiest" ever made in the group's name. "The only person who allegedly heard anything about it is the one person who is dead, who can't actually come here and say it's a load of rubbish."

He said John Lennon would have said something about the tape if he had known about it: "He never said anything to anyone. He didn't say anything to Brian Epstein or to Paul McCartney."

Even if anything had been said between John Lennon and Ted Taylor it did not constitute a business deal: "One drunken person recording another bunch of drunks does not constitute business deals."

The case continues

Rollercoasters can damage your brain, say doctors

By Charles Arthur
Science and Technology Editor

ROLLER-COASTERS can seriously damage your brain, warns a French doctor who has discovered nerve damage in a number of otherwise healthy people, days after they went on high-speed rides.

The effects only showed up when people began getting severe headaches hours later, said Valerie Biousse, a neurology specialist at the Lariboisiere Hospital in Paris. And she warned that the numbers of such cases, although small, was increasing as fairgrounds offer bigger rides and more people go on them.

Even healthy people, she said, should pay attention to the warning signs displayed at the entrances to modern rides, which can generate forces of more than 4g - four times that of gravity - during turns and after steep drops. "When you're on a very fast roller-coaster, for your body it's like doing very hard physical exercise. Your heart rate goes up, and everything is under extra strain," said Dr Biousse.

The damage she observed in patients, who were aged between 20 and 55, ranged from small strokes to minor bleeding in the walls of head arteries. She said that they must have been caused by the abrupt

changes in acceleration that are typical of modern roller coasters. The effect is almost like a car crash - which can also produce invisible injuries that only become apparent days later.

A spokeswoman for Alton Towers, which operates the Oblivion ride - featuring a 60-metre vertical drop that generates 4.5g on riders at its end - said: "All our rides have safety warnings at the entrance. If you



Risky trip: Roller-coasters can cause strokes and bleeding, experts say

suffer from back, neck or heart problems or are pregnant, you shouldn't go on the ride."

But Dr Biousse told *New Scientist* magazine that the four patients she had examined included a dance instructor in her thirties, and that half the patients she examined had no underlying diseases that could have contributed to the injuries she observed. "In every published case, the first symptom was an unusual headache. People should see a doctor if they have a headache a little time after going on a roller coaster ride."

The Health and Safety Executive, which is responsible for licensing roller coasters in the UK, said that there is no legal limit on the g forces that a ride can exert. "The onus is on the operator to demonstrate that risks to people's health and safety is kept as low as reasonably practicable. That doesn't mean zero risk," said a spokesman.

Similar problems were detected in 1992 with bungie jumping, when doctors began recording cases in which people's eyesight was affected by the force exerted on their eyeballs as the bungie comes tight, at the bottom of the jump. People have also dislocated or shattered their hip bones on jumps.

'How new men are suffering daddy stress'

By Roger Dobson

New man is suffering a new trauma, daddy stress.

Men may be spending more time with playing with their children, picking them up from school and looking after them when they are sick, but many are keeping their good parenting a secret from the boss and workmates.

While it's acceptable to be upfront about taking time off for running marathons, studying, going to funerals and being in the Territorial Army, admitting to picking up the children from school is still taboo, a national conference on Men as Fathers was told yesterday.

Instead of telling the truth, many men pretend they are

meeting clients or going to conferences, or feeling ill, a pretence that is putting them under increasing stress.

"Men hide their involvement with children much more than women," said Adrienne Burgess, author of *Fatherhood Reclaimed* told delegates to the NSPCC conference.

"When they go to collect the children they will say they are going to a meeting, or a conference, or a site visit, and that kind of thing. When they have time off to look after the children they will say they themselves are ill rather than the kids."

"They are devising all sorts of strategies because they fear they will be seen as not being a real man and that it might affect their careers." She says

some men will go to enormous lengths to conceal their involvement. "I interviewed one divorced man who had been picking his daughter up from school at 3.45pm every Wednesday for two years and not even his secretary knew."

Despite the strain of inventing excuses, men are spending much more time with their children, but worry that they are not, delegates to the conference in Cardiff were told. While working women worry about getting away on time to pick up the children, working fathers' principal worry is about whether they are getting enough time with the children. In the 1970s only 12 per cent of men had such worries compared to 74 per cent now.

But despite the increasing

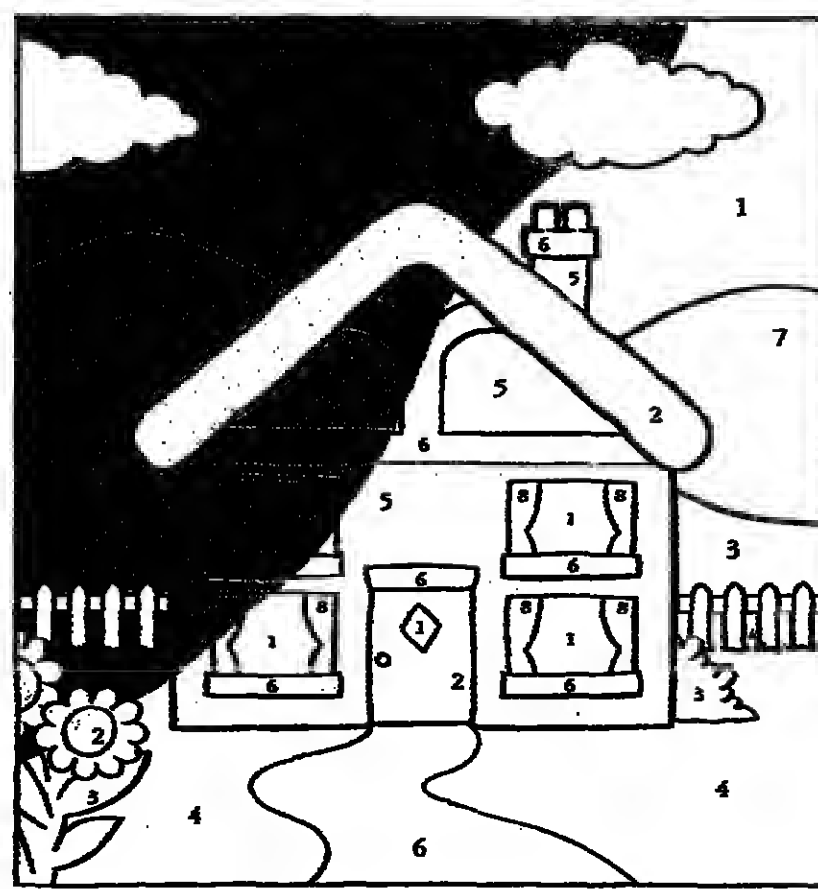
involvement of fathers with their children, one in five men are at least initially opposed to the pregnancy of their partner or wife. One contributing factor here, according to Ms Burgess, is that men are not educated early enough.

"From the beginning, from the ante natal services onwards, we need to involve the father. No-one interviews a man whose wife is pregnant, and there is no point at which men are drawn into the process. By bringing them in, you could deal with their fears and anxieties and identify any future problems," she said.

The aim of the NSPCC conference, the first of its kind, is to raise awareness about the cultural changes affecting men as fathers and partners.

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The anatomy of a very secret coup



Offered services: Military consultant Lieutenant-Colonel Tim Spicer, who objects to the term 'mercenary', with his wife Caroline. Photograph: PA

Documents reveal British involvement in overthrow of dictator. Fran Abrams and Andrew Buncombe report

"THE PRESENT situation," said the fax, "is that there are about 30,000 troops located at Lungi International Airport poised to attack Freetown at an unspecified date."

The letter, dated 8 July last year, is notable for its matter-of-fact style. It signs off: "I thank you very much in your willingness to assist in this our time of need."

The letter, one of several documents obtained by *The Independent*, reveals a plan to overthrow an African regime by using mercenaries that has led to a HM Customs and Excise investigation and growing embarrassment for the British government, which has been implicated in the plan.

The fax was sent by Momodu Koroma, a member of the exiled Sierra Leone government led by President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, in Conakry, capital of the west African state of Guinea. Conakry was once described as "the Paris of Africa" but is now a city of 500,000 and little charm. Hot, dirty and dusty, with chanking exhaust fumes and endless lines of jammed traffic, it is a place where, as one writer put it, most people spend their time planning how to leave. Which is precisely what Mr Kabbah and his supporters were planning to do: they wanted to go home.

They already had the support of those 30,000 men from the Nigerian-backed Economic Community of West African States (Ecomog). But in addition, not in the hush of Sierra Leone and Guinea were the Kabbahs, an ethnic army built up by Mr Kabbah while he was president.

The strength of the Kabbahs - and the resentment this had created among anti-Kabbah factions - had been one of the factors that led to the coup led by Johnny Paul Koroma (no relation to the minister for presidential affairs) which ousted the president in May 1997. But to return to power, Mr Kabbah would need the support of the Kabbahs, and for them to be trained and properly armed. That was why they turned to Lt-Col Tim Spicer, a former British soldier who had served in Bosnia and the Falklands.

The coup was to be funded by Rakesh Saxena, a former Thai banker who was on bail in Canada for an alleged \$88m (£55m) fraud in Thailand. Mr Saxena, had diamond mining interests in Sierra Leone, which were threatened by the instability there. An exchange of faxes with Momodu Koroma shows that he was prepared to put \$1.5m behind the plan to restore Mr Kabbah to power.

Even though he was on bail in Canada, Mr Saxena knew immediately who to turn to in order to convert the idea into a military reality. A phone call to Lt-Col Spicer in London during the weekend of 12/13 July whetted the former Scots Guards officer's appetite. Things had not been going well for Spicer's "military consulting" business which needed a boost.

No sooner had the phone call ended than Lt-Col Spicer was faxing Mr Saxena with details of what he could offer. "We are certainly able to assist ... as



Mercy mission: US Marines help evacuate more than 500 foreigners who fled Sierra Leone after the 1997 coup

you are aware we have unique expertise and knowledge of the country, already have a very good relationship with the government and with Ecomog, and have the resources to implement any project the government decides on in an effective, timely manner with minimum collateral damage to innocent parties," he wrote.

He planned to fly to Conakry on Wednesday 16 July; for \$60,000 plus \$10,000 in expenses, he would produce a full report on what he could offer. Within two days, the money had been wired to him in London by Samir Patel, Mr Saxena's aide at the Sierra Leone and Guinea-based Jupiter Mining Corporation.

Lt-Col Spicer should prepare

'We are certainly able to assist ... any project ... with minimum collateral damage'

his report within a week and should then fly to Canada to see him, Mr Saxena said. He had recently invested in two properties in Sierra Leone and his offer of help was solely motivated by a desire to protect his business interests, he said.

Lt-Col Spicer did as he was asked. Once the deal was agreed, the next step was to find the arms the pro-Kabbah forces needed. The obvious source was Bulgaria, where small arms are cheap and the export controls are lax. It is not known precisely how the weapons were shipped to Guinea, but it is believed they were flown via Nigeria, which is the subject of an UN arms embargo.

The 30 tons of arms were flown to Africa on 21 February, possibly by IBIS Air, Sandline's air support company. It is rumoured that some time late last year a plane was impounded in Liberia, but that it was re-

leased after protests from the Nigerians. It is said that some of the men on board were recognised as known "military consultants", or in common parlance, mercenaries.

Lt-Col Spicer objects strongly to the term "mercenary". His company's publicity material describes its business as "conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction." It says the firm would never become involved with illegal arms trading, rebel factions or international organised crime. As well as providing military operations on land and by air, it also operates a former Royal Navy gubboat. While the Sierra Leone troops were preparing for the counter-coup, the country's government in exile was not idle. Peter Penfold, the British High Commissioner, had become close to President Kabbah and had also met Lt-Col Spicer.

Obtaining support from other countries was not overly difficult. Johnny Koroma was a ruthless dictator who in his short time as leader was to be responsible for hundreds of deaths. Britain, Sierra Leone's former colonial power, indicated its support for Mr Kabbah, even inviting him to the Commonwealth leaders' summit in Edinburgh. And, during the early part of this year, as the plan progressed, Lt-Col Spicer discussed the issue with Foreign Office officials in London.

In February, the counter-coup was launched. The troops which had been waiting at Lungi airport, just 16 miles from Freetown across the mouth of the Rokel river, were now trained and armed. They restored Mr Kabbah to power, bringing thousands of people on to the streets to greet him as he returned in triumph to Freetown.

He wasted no time in giving thanks where it was due. On the day of his reinstatement, he gave a speech acknowledging Britain's role in helping him back to power. "The British prime minister and his government deserve our special thanks for their support and assistance in every respect," he said. **Leading article, page 20**

We're grateful, says Sierra Leone minister

By Andrew Buncombe

THE Sierra Leone government yesterday said that anyone questioning the role of British officials in returning the elected president to power should be ashamed of themselves.

Dr Julius Spencer, the Minister for Information, said he thought people were "missing the point" in the row about possible collusion between Foreign Office officials and Sandline International.

"I would have to say that if the British government and British officials were involved in supplying arms, then the British people should be proud of their government," he told BBC Radio 4's *The World at One*.

"If they did, they did something that has changed the course of history for the better. The people of Sierra Leone are immensely grateful. Let the

British people, or the Opposition come to Sierra Leone and then they will know what the people here are feeling.

"If people knew how bad life had been under the illegal regime, they would be ashamed people were raising this issue. Even if the law was broken people should be happy that it was broken for a good reason."

Johnny Paul Koroma led the factions which ousted the elected president, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, in May 1997. In the 10 months before he was ousted in February 1998, experts believe his regime was responsible for hundreds of deaths. Britain never recognised his legitimacy and invited President Kabbah to attend the Commonwealth summit in Edinburgh.

The deal between Sandline was brokered initially through a third party, Rakesh Saxena, but the contract between the

mercenaries and the exiled Sierra Leone government was signed by President Kabbah, or on his behalf by Solomon Berewa, the country's Solicitor General. The deal was settled in cash.

Yesterday Sandline repeated its claim that it believed it was acting with the approval of "Her Majesty's Government".

Its solicitor, Richard Slowe, said: "President Kabbah's government has at all times been the only internationally recognised lawful government of Sierra Leone and UN Security Council resolution 1132, which imposed sanctions, called for the return of the government."

"Kabbah personally signed the agreement with Sandline for the provision of personnel and military equipment as well as the End User Certificate for that equipment. My clients have been advised that no offence had been committed."

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Scargill ally to head train drivers' union

By Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

THE THREAT of a new era of trade union militancy in the rail industry loomed yesterday after a leading member of Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party won an unexpected victory in the election for the leadership of the train drivers' union.

The party has already secured key posts in RMT, the highest rail union, but yesterday's results marks a considerable extension of its influence.

Dave Rix, a relatively unknown hard-left union official from Leeds, polled 4,558 votes compared with 3,357 for Lew Adams, who has led Aslef for four years.

While Mr Adams was a left-wing pragmatist, Mr Rix, 35, belongs to a Marxist party which sees industrial conflict rather than negotiation as the means of winning better working conditions.

Mr Adams is Old Labour and has been a constant thorn in the side of the Government, but is considered right-wing by Mr Rix.

Next in line for takeover by Mr Scargill's party is the RMT where Bob Crow, the deputy general secretary, is a member of the SLP. Jimmy Knapp, 58, the RMT general secretary, will



Surprise win: Dave Rix (left) has ousted Lew Adams (right) to lead train drivers' union Aslef. Photograph: PA

have to decide later this year whether or not to run in a fresh election for the leadership of his union. Four out of the 11-strong rail executive of the union support Mr Scargill's party.

It is understood that if Mr Knapp, also a pragmatic left-winger, decides to step aside, his deputy will probably run and stands a strong chance of victory. With Mr Crow as leader of the RMT and Mr Rix at Aslef, the threat of industrial disruption would loom even larger.

Mr Rix is little known outside his local branch of the union, although he stood in the last general election as a candidate for the SLP. He has

worked on the railways since he was 16, joining its Holbeck depot in Leeds as a trainee driver. The Barnsley-born father-of-two has worked alongside Communists in the union and was prominent in supporting the miners during the strike of 1984-5. He regards Mr Scargill as one of the great heroes of the labour movement and himself as a true socialist.

The new general secretary, who will start work next January, also knows the union's rule book backwards.

The SLP has exploited dissatisfaction in the union over restructuring schemes signed by Mr Adams with some 30 train-operating companies. While

Aslef members welcomed £20,000-£25,000 salaries, they were unhappy about longer driving periods. Fragmentation of the network since privatisation has led to local officials like Mr Rix achieving greater prominence.

Mr Rix has led the left in the union over the last three or four years and with his supporters has made capital out of the decision by the present union leadership to enter a partnership with Richard Branson to form a training company for drivers.

Mr Adams said he was disappointed to lose to an SLP candidate: "Obviously he had a lot of resources behind him for this purpose. I am sad that as a consequence, our union will not now have the same relationship with the Labour government."

Mr Rix indicated yesterday that he would not propose a merger of the two unions, but the chances of such an amalgamation would then be much greater. Moderate union leaders would look with considerable trepidation at the spectre of one powerful union for the rail industry under the leadership of the SLP.

What makes Aslef a potent force is the immediate impact of any industrial action and the virtual impossibility of recruiting staff to replace strikers.



Edward Burrows, 12, the youngest soloist in 'Good and Evil', this summer's BBC Proms season, rehearses with Genevieve Daley and Christopher Good, who plays Elizabethan magician/chemist Dr John Dee, at the Royal Albert Hall, London. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Virgin raises fares in bid to boost train bookings

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

RICHARD Branson's Virgin Trains empire is to raise its cheapest walk-on fares by more than four times the rate of inflation this summer.

The 14.5 per cent price hike will affect travellers who use SuperSaver tickets - which can be used on any day except Fridays - on Virgin CrossCountry, whose sprawling rail network visits all of Britain's major towns, except London.

Rail campaigners attacked the move. Jonathan Bray, of the Save Our Railways pressure group, said: "Virgin is systematically putting the cost of turn-up-and-go travel through the roof." John Moorhouse, secretary of the Rail Users' Consultative Committee, added: "We are not pleased with the company pricing up. It

means more expensive travel for a lot of people who turn up and just want to catch the next train."

The Government is considering measures to restrict the ability of private train operators to introduce higher fares - which ministers say will price people off the rail network.

Not only will passengers face more expensive tickets, but the CrossCountry service remains notoriously irregular - with more than one in seven trains "officially late".

"The service is appalling already. I cannot believe that by raising ticket prices you will attract more people," said Helen Jones, Labour MP for Warrington North, and a regular user of Virgin Trains.

Mr Branson's railway managers disagree. Virgin's policy is centred on its belief that private train companies will only become a success if they

follow an "airline-style" booking system. This means passengers can only get cheap deals if they book ahead - by specifying their outbound and return journeys.

The company - which is expected to get approval this week to be floated on the Stock Exchange later this year - has even cut some of the price of some pre-booked journeys. Travellers who buy "apex" tickets from Birmingham to Bristol pay £21.20 for a return, but in the summer this drops to £19.50.

Brian Barrett, Virgin Trains' chief executive, said yesterday: "This was an experiment we tried out last year and it has worked. Nearly 20 per cent of passengers now book ahead."

Last year, the company increased its cheap walk-on fares from London to Scotland by 15 per cent. Virgin expects that "40 per cent" of its revenue will be generated by book-ahead tickets in about two years' time.

According to an analysis of the company's fares by transport consultant Barry Doe, the price of an advance ticket has only risen by 2 per cent since 1995 whereas SuperSaver - the cheapest walk-on tickets - have rocketed by 22 per cent.

Despite the book-ahead fares, Mr Doe said that Virgin was putting up its ticket prices faster than any other operator. "Great Western Trains has frozen its pre-booked fares, why couldn't have Virgin?"

Premium price for a ticket to ride

Today's price	From May	% rise
Birmingham - Bristol £23.30	£26.50	13.7
Swansea - York £61.50	£70.50	14.7
Plymouth - Leeds £74.30	£85	14.4
Liverpool - Winchester £51	£58.50	14.7
Manchester - Torquay £58.30	£67	14.9

*supersaver return
Annual inflation 3.3 per cent

Cuts ring changes for mobile phone price war

By Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

SUMMER mobile phone price war looked on the cards as Vodafone announced it was slashing off-peak consumer call charges by 50 per cent.

"We would be very surprised if our rivals did not follow suit in some way," said Mike Caldwell, manager of corporate communications for Vodafone. "It's part of the trend of mobiles getting cheaper to use."

But the Telecom Users' Association warned there was a long way to go before consumers will get a good deal from mobiles.

Vodafone said that it was cutting off-peak calls to 5p from 10p from 1 June and tariffs between 7pm and 8am would start from only 2p a minute for those subscribing to its local call saver option.

"It's the first time that you have been able to make a call that is at a cheaper rate than BT on

a mobile," added Mr Caldwell. Around 5 billion minutes are spent on mobile phones every year and the number is growing by 40 per cent. In January the networks revealed record connections in the run-up to Christmas and currently 9 million people own mobile phones.

But the mobile phone industry was criticised as being a "rip-off" for customers two months ago when Ofcom announced it was referring it to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission over high prices calling mobiles from landlines. A spokesman for Ofcom said yesterday that the MMC inquiry was expected to cover other areas as well.

A spokeswoman for Orange said yesterday that they welcomed Vodafone's move. "We're actually pleased to see Vodafone following the examples set by Orange over value for money and services tailored to individual needs. The com-

petitive nature of the telecommunications market can only benefit the customer." However she said the company had no plans to change its tariffs as a result of Vodafone's move.

Similarly One2One said that its services offered better value for money and it had no plans to follow Vodafone. "I don't think the mobile phone market has ever been cosy," said a spokesman.

The other telecom giant, Cellnet, said it was already planning to launch new tariffs on 9 June. "We believe our existing tariff structure is competitive and offers value for money," said a spokesman. "We review our tariffs in order to ensure we remain competitive but there is no immediate plan to do so."

Despite Vodafone's action the Telecom Users' Association said yesterday that telecom companies had a long way to go before they could be called "consumer responsive".



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Danger zone: A tropical shark swimming in the Shark Theatre at the opening of the National Marine Aquarium in Plymouth yesterday. The centre also houses endangered seahorses along with an array of fish and marine life

Photograph: Tim Cuff

I'm no art world Capone, dealer tells Picasso trial

A PROPERTY dealer who is accused of helping the celebrated cat burglar Peter Scott to sell a stolen Picasso yesterday denied that he was the "Al Capone" of the art theft world.

Ronald Spring, 70, the chief prosecution witness against his alleged accomplice, rejected suggestions that he had been involved in a string of shady deals - including one to steal another Picasso masterpiece.

Mr Scott, 67, whose victims in the 1960s and 1970s included film stars Sophia Loren and Elizabeth Taylor, is accused of trying to set up a deal to offload the abstract work *Tête de Femme*, valued at £650,000, which was stolen from a May-

fair gallery. He denies conspiracy to handle stolen goods.

Snaresbrook Crown Court in south London was told that Spring, a former legal executive, had been involved in a plot to obtain a Picasso work, *Tête de Mousquetaire*, by replacing it with a fake in the London saleroom of Christie's.

Under cross-examination yesterday Spring, of Southgate, north London, said: "I just knew what was being suggested could not happen. It was pure fantasy. I just played along for the entertainment to see what would happen, but I knew all along it was impossible."

The court heard the "fantasy" plot to steal the Christie's Picasso had fallen through just two days before the *Tête de Femme* was stolen from the Lefevre Gallery by a man brandishing a shotgun on 6 March last year.

But Spring strenuously denied suggestions that he had been involved in the 6 March robbery as part of a series of deals involving works worth millions, including stolen paintings stolen from Longleat, the Marquess of Bath's Wiltshire stately home.

The court had heard previously that the *Tête de Femme* was recovered only after Spring had unwittingly set up a deal to sell it to a team of undercover detectives posing as crooked art

dealers. Mr Scott, who claims he has "retired" from crime to become a celebrity tennis coach, and lives in Islington, north London, told Spring that he wanted up to £75,000 for the Picasso portrait within seven days, the court was told.

It was alleged that he asked for the cash when he handed the work to his alleged accomplice within hours of the Mayfair robbery.

Helen McCormack, for the defence, put it in Spring that he had been the key to the deal after his previous involvement in the art crime world. "The explanation is that you were up to your neck in stealing art for many years, certainly since 1994," she said.

But Spring hit back, saying the *Tête de Femme* deal, from which he planned to net £25,000, had been the first time he had dabbled in the world of art crime. He told the court: "I am no Al Capone. This is absolute rubbish."

The court heard that Spring, who had already admitted a charge of conspiring to handle stolen goods arising from the Mayfair robbery, told an undercover police officer, named only as Patrick, that the raid was known to him and had a future in art theft. He said: "This young fellow is a rough diamond." The case continues.

Trial told of a life on the run paid for with violent crime

AN armed bank robber escaped from police and then funded his life on-the-run with a catalogue of violent crime - including the theft of a Picasso oil painting, the Old Bailey court was told yesterday.

Russell Grant-McVicar, 33, carried out eight robberies and one attempted robbery - netting more than £100,000 - between June 1993 and May 1997, James Hines, for the prosecution, said.

"They were carried out in a most cowardly fashion, namely by carrying an imitation gun, or pretending to carry a firearm, such as to terrorise innocent members of the public, staff in various banks and bureau de change departments and in an art gallery in one robbery," said Mr Hines.

Mr Grant-McVicar, who is defending himself, has denied 16 charges of robbery, attempted robbery and firearms offences.

In the raid on the gallery in the West End of London last year, he allegedly travelled there by a black London cab and ordered it to wait as he was collecting a painting. He carried a holdall which concealed a double-barrelled shotgun.

The gallery was housing an original Picasso - *Tête de Femme*, said the prosecution.

The Lefevre gallery specialised in Impressionist and modern painting and was equipped with security cameras and panic alarms. Once inside, Mr Grant-McVicar approached a female member



Grant-McVicar: Allegedly travelled to raid in a taxi

of staff and asked the price of the Picasso, said the prosecution. "When told, he said 'I have got a shotgun. I want that painting'," Mr Hines said.

"She was stunned and said 'I beg your pardon?' He repeated his demand and reached into the holdall and produced part of the stock of the shotgun. She said 'Please, don't take it out.'"

The prosecution alleged Mr Grant-McVicar told her to take the painting off the wall, but when she said she was not allowed to, he ripped it from the wall himself. As he returned to the cab, he pointed the gun at the driver and told him to go to Berkeley Square - but later diverted to south London.

After his arrest in Southampton last year, he allegedly gave police "clear, unambiguous and thoroughly detailed accounts of the robberies".

The case continues today.

Butchers 'wiped knives with fingers'

STAFF at John Barr's butcher shop which has been implicated in the world's worst *E. coli* O157 outbreak would sometimes use a finger to wipe dry knives after cleaning, an inquiry heard yesterday.

Knives used for cutting raw meat were also used in open bags of cooked meat, admitted James Murray, assistant manager of the shop in Wishaw, Lanarkshire.

Up to 21 elderly people died from November 1996 onwards in Lanarkshire and central Scotland from the outbreak.

Mr Murray's disclosure came on the 13th day of the fatal accident inquiry into the deaths, held in Motherwell, when he was being questioned about practices in the shop.

Knives were cleaned at the sink - but he agreed in cross-ex-

amination that "sometimes" staff would then wipe them dry with a finger.

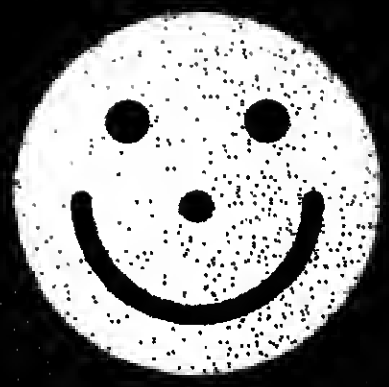
Mr Murray also said that staff would not invariably wash their hands between serving raw and cooked meat. "They kept themselves very clean. Whether they did it every time, I could not say that," he said.

But he denied a suggestion from Angus Stewart QC, for health authorities, that the shop had become "an infection superstore".

Mr Murray was questioned over the staff's motives for arriving early at the shop on 23 November 1996, ahead of a visit by environmental health officials.

Mr Murray said that John Barr had arranged for managers to go in to put cooked meat aside for the health officials. The inquiry continues today.

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Passive smoking claim makes history

Former worker at old folks' home blames polluted atmosphere for onset of asthma in case that could set legal precedent

A NURSE claiming damages over passive smoking in the first case of its kind told a court yesterday how she was left breathless and wheezing by the atmosphere in which she was forced to work.

Sylvia Sparrow, aged 60, claims she was left with asthma and severe chest problems after three years of working in the Worsley Lodge elderly people's home in Swinton, Greater Manchester.

Mrs Sparrow told the High Court in Manchester she had worked in an area of the home that at least five residents had adopted as a "smokers' corner". She said: "I started experiencing a sore throat. By the time I came off my shift I could hardly speak. Going in on a morning I used to feel sick and I didn't know how I would get through the shift. I used to battle on, but it got so I couldn't go on. The thought of getting through the day was so stressful and I used to experience coughing."

Mrs Sparrow, a State Enrolled Nurse, of Swinton, is claiming an undisclosed amount for injury and loss of earnings from St Andrew's Homes Ltd, which ran Worsley Lodge. The home is now under new ownership.

It is the first time a passive smoking case has come before the courts

in England and Wales and the outcome could set a legal precedent. Mrs Sparrow's action, being funded by the Royal College of Nursing, alleges that the company failed to provide a safe environment for her to work.

Her counsel, Alan Rawley QC, told Mr Justice Holland: "They should have provided a smoking room in which she need not have gone. There are smoking rooms in many institutions and non-smoking compartments on railway trains. It is not beyond the wit of man to devise a system which would keep her away from smoking, particularly once she had given notice of her disabilities."

Mr Rawley said that it was a "moot point" whether passive smoking could cause asthma in an adult. But doctors had diagnosed Mrs Sparrow as probably predisposed to the disease, which remained symptomless until she was exposed to the irritant of smoke in her work.

Mrs Sparrow worked part time at the home, which had 72 elderly residents, from 1986. Her symptoms started in 1989, when her GP diagnosed her problems as being caused by tobacco fumes.

Mrs Sparrow said she had asked to be moved from the "green

lounge" area of the home where residents regularly smoked, but after a period elsewhere was told she had to move back there permanently. In February 1992, she was signed off sick for six months and never returned.

Mrs Sparrow agreed that a doctor had later assessed the long-term effects on her health as minor and a tribunal had fixed the extent of her disability as 5 per cent.

She denied she had suggested the whole of the home should be made smoke-free or that she had exaggerated the extent of her condition. She had not left to look for another job earlier because she liked working at the home, she said.

She said a suggestion that she could have avoided the area where there was smoke was very unfair. "It was my duty to be in that area. I would not leave the patients."

There was constant smoking in the area and two of the residents would have 600 cigarettes each brought in by relatives each month. "Others didn't smoke to that extent but they did smoke," said Mrs Sparrow. "As soon as they had their breakfast they would light up. They were constantly lighting up. It was their chatting corner and their smoking corner."

The hearing continues today.



Sylvia Sparrow: 'As soon as they had finished breakfast they would light up'

Why nicotine is as addictive as heroin

By Charles Arthur
Science and Technology Editor

SCIENTISTS reckon they have solved a puzzle about nicotine addiction: why, if it gives the brain less of a buzz than drugs like cocaine or heroin, does it generate comparable withdrawal symptoms?

Now, experiments with rats have shown that nicotine, the active drug in tobacco, depresses the brain's ability to experience pleasure and respond to chemical "rewards".

Researchers from the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, California, found that rats suddenly deprived of nicotine had to be given much more of a pleasurable reward stimulus to get the same buzz they had before.

Using electrodes implanted in the rats' brains, the researchers measured the levels of "reward" experienced by chemical receptors. Drugs such as cocaine, heroin, alcohol and nicotine all produce their "high" when parts of their molecules latch on to chemical receptors in particular nerves in the brain. Addiction is a reflection of a physical demand by those receptors for more of the chemical. Getting used to the absence of the "high" produced by those molecules is part of the process of withdrawal, and varies in severity for different drugs.

In the experiment, nicotine withdrawal produced a decrease in brain reward function - meaning that for the same stimulation, the nerve centres experienced a smaller buzz. The effects lasted four days, during which the rats showed the classic signs of withdrawal such as anxiety, irritability and craving.

The scientists wrote in the journal *Nature*: "The decreased function in brain reward systems during nicotine withdrawal is comparable in magnitude and duration to that of other major drugs of abuse and may constitute an important motivational factor that contributes to craving, relapse and continued tobacco consumption in humans."

Camelot's numbers come under scrutiny

THE lottery operator Camelot's books are to come under scrutiny from the Government's speeding watchdog, it was announced yesterday. The National Audit Office will be given access to the company's records to ensure the right amount of money is being paid to good causes.

The move was hailed as a step towards "greater transparency and stronger parliamentary accountability" over the lottery.

The Tory MP David Davis, chairman of the Committee of Public Accounts, said yesterday: "People play the lottery voluntarily but this does not detract from the need to ensure that it is well regulated and that the money collected is properly accounted for."

"This will be possible now that Parliament's auditors will have access to Camelot's records relating to the financial control



David Davis: 'Must ensure lottery is well-regulated'

into the National Lottery Distribution Fund.

Although payments are monitored by the regulator Oflot, the NAO said Oflot had not carried out 11 of 21 checks designed to ensure the licence was being stuck to, prompting calls for greater accountability.

The changes are to be incorporated into the National Lottery Bill. Camelot - which is a private company - said that although it had no objection to the National Audit Office having access to its accounts, the change meant altering a contract drawn up at the start of the licence term.

Joanna Manning-Cooper, for Camelot, said: "We have nothing to hide so it's not a problem for us, but it's another unilateral change to our licence half-way through the contract. We're already one of the most audited organisations in the country."

of lottery activities. Today's announcement is extremely good news both for people who take part in the lottery and the good causes that benefit."

Mr Davis said the need for greater access to Camelot's accounts had been flagged up by the NAO in 1996 when auditors warned that they were unable to check whether the right amount of money had been paid

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By Paul McCann
Media Editor

INFRINGEMENT of privacy by national newspapers is a much smaller worry for the public than inaccuracy despite the call for privacy legislation which followed the death of Diana, Princess of Wales last year. Only 12 per cent of complaints to the Press Complaints Commission in 1997 were from people who felt their privacy had been invaded. Instead 56 per cent of the complaints were from members of the public who were concerned about inaccurate reporting or who wanted a right of reply.

Yet privacy issues took up most of the PCC's time last year when it reviewed its privacy code in the wake of the death

three per cent of the total.

The concentration on privacy complaints also means that the PCC has a special privacy commissioner to handle the 368 complaints it received last year.

"The high-profile privacy cases attract a lot of high profile coverage," said Guy Black, director of the PCC yesterday. "But although it is a high profile thing and attracts the public's interest, in fact it doesn't actually happen that often."

"Around 90 per cent of our complaints come from ordinary members of the public and the fact is that privacy infringements are mainly concentrated on public figures. The public is much more affected by inaccuracies."

However Mr Black rejected the suggestion that last year's changes to the code were a knee-jerk reaction to the death of the Princess of Wales or that the code is skewed in favour of the famous. "It is not just about the number of complaint," he said. "We have to be responsive to public and parliamentary opinion. For example we only get a tiny number of complaints about payments to criminals by newspapers, but as the Mary Bell case shows it is something the public feel strongly about."

The PCC dealt with 2,944 complaints last year, double the number it received in the early Nineties, but similar to 1996. The vast majority of complaints were resolved by organising a right of reply, a letter for publication or a correction. In 82 unresolvable cases the PCC conducted an investigation and found for 34 complainants. In 11 cases it forced newspapers to print the full transcript of its adjudication.

Almost half of all complaints concerned stories written in national newspapers, but regional daily and weekly newspapers accounted for one third of the total. Magazines attracted only 4 per cent of complaints.



Mary Bell: Cheque-book journalism still a concern

of Diana, Princess of Wales. The PCC code now contains a specific right for people to have their privacy respected and it was tightened up to further limit the use of photographs taken in private places. The new complaints code was even rewritten to specifically guarantee protection for Prince William and Prince Harry until they leave school.

The PCC undertook the changes to try to head off pressure for statutory limits of the press after public outrage at the perceived role of paparazzi photographers in the death of the Princess. In fact harassment complaints amounted to only



Trick of the light: Art-lovers viewing the Masters Of Light exhibition on Dutch painting from Utrecht which opens today at the National Gallery. The show focuses on work from the Golden Age of art which flourished in the Netherlands between 1600 and 1670. Photograph: David Rose

Organic farmer on warpath

AN ORGANIC farmer may take legal action to prevent a neighbour planting weedkiller-resistant, genetically engineered maize, it emerged today.

The Soil Association, which certifies food as organic, has said that its concerns about genetic contamination may lead to the environmentally-conscious grower near Totnes, Devon, losing his organic status over the crop.

Friends of the Earth has warned that the case could be "only the first of many" if the Government does not impose a moratorium on genetically-engineered crops. The test site is close to where the organic farmer plans to plant a sweet-corn crop. The two crops could cross-pollinate.

Peter Riley of FoE said "The threat to the livelihood of an organic farmer is yet another example of the dangers of planting genetically modified crops."

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From high life to low-life: Terry Ramsden, wayward son of the Thatcher generation

Jason Bennetto charts the rise and fall of an Essex man who gambled and lost

HE WAS the archetypal Thatcherite success story. The son of a postal worker from Romford, Essex, he rose to become one of the country's richest men and most powerful racehorse owners.

His millionaire lifestyle, built in the early 1980s on trading in Japanese bonds, included the obligatory executive jet, Rolls Royces, homes around the world, and the ownership of a football club.

His gambling record was the envy of every trackside punter – a regular winner both on the racecourse and at the bookies. He was a true Eighties self-made man with his cockney vowels and shoulder length hair.

Yet Terry Ramsden, 46, looked anything but a high-flying, city whizz-kid yesterday as he stood in the dock at the Old Bailey. A bankrupt with debts of more than £100m, he was jailed for 21 months for trying to conceal about £300,000 from his creditors.

Ramsden's roller-coaster career began in the City at the age of 16 as an insurance clerk. He quickly realised he could make more money by working for himself and set up his own business, making £25,000 in the first month.

But the vehicle for Ramsden's career was an Edinburgh company called Glen International which he bought in 1984, when it had a turnover of £18,000.

By 1987, the figure had risen to £3.5bn and Ramsden was said to be the nation's 57th richest man.

The venture was based on his knowledge of the specialised and volatile market in Japanese warrants. These were options to buy shares in Japanese companies. He gambled on a rising market and got it right. After hitting the jackpot, he was quick to adopt a suitably flamboyant and high-flying lifestyle to go with the new-found wealth.



Fall from grace: Terry Ramsden in his heyday (left) as racehorse owner and (above) arriving at court for the trial that ended yesterday with him being jailed for 21 months. His counsel told the judge: 'Rightly or wrongly, he felt his failure was not his fault but due to the misguided views of others'

Along with his Porsche, Ferraris and Rolls Royces, he was interested in racehorses – lots of them. At one stage he owned 75. One of his biggest successes on the racecourse was when his horse Not So Silly won the Ayr Gold Cup in 1987.

Small of stature, but invariably accompanied by minder, he was a regular visitor to the winner's enclosure. "I'm a stockbroker from Enfield, I've got long hair and I like a bet," he once said.

He also owned a Georgian mansion on a luxury estate in Blackheath,

south-east London, where he could relax in a swimming pool with bologram shark fins beamed on to the water, before flying by helicopter to Walsall Football Club, of which he was both owner and chairman.

He lived with his wife, Lisa, and their son, Jake. They also had homes in Scotland, Bermuda and Portugal.

But in 1986 the market and Ramsden's luck changed. The 1987 crash knocked hundreds of millions of pounds off the value of his securities. He started to run out of cash to keep the huge and

complex portfolio of securities afloat and his marriage was on the rocks.

Added to this, he was estimated to have lost £58m at the racetrack – there were even stories of him parting with £2m in a single day.

Within a year, Glen International crashed, owing £98m, and he moved to the United States.

In September 1991, a warrant for his arrest was issued on fraud charges and he was detained in a Los Angeles jail until his return to Britain in February 1992.

The next month, Ramsden was

declared bankrupt – with the Inland Revenue demanding £21.5m and other creditors bringing the total debt to near £100m.

Ramsden escaped with a two-year suspended sentence in November 1993 after he pleaded guilty to offences of recklessly inducing fresh investment in his empire.

As a bankrupt, Ramsden was required to disclose all his assets and income but failed to reveal the existence of a hidden trust and concealed his ownership of 3 million shares in the Silversword Corpora-

tion, a Canadian company in which he had a controlling interest.

Thousands of pounds was paid from the trust fund to Ramsden's mother, Florence, a former cleaner, which she passed on to her son. He also failed to mention winnings of £77,000 in 1992, from an accumulator bet involving five horses and a dog.

Last year, the Serious Fraud Office announced that Ramsden was to be prosecuted for failing to disclose assets.

At his trial, Ramsden admitted

failing to disclose about £300,000. It was also revealed that the fund had also helped pay for a £323,800 house for his wife and son.

Jailing Ramsden for 21 months, Judge Peter Beaumont QC also ordered him to pay £10,000 towards prosecution costs.

He told Ramsden: "You broke the law and must now be punished."

The judge said he would serve at least half the sentence in prison. Ramsden, of Fulham, south-west London, pleaded guilty to three charges of breaching the Insolvency Act by failing to disclose all his assets.

Anthony Arlidge QC, for the defence, said: "He was motivated by a desire to win back his wife and restart his family life. He accepts now that is no longer possible."

He added: "He is a man of considerable talent, who for a long time was extremely successful. Rightly or wrongly, he felt his failure was not his fault but due to the misguided views of others."

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Blunkett's £6.5m 'breathing space' for pre-schools

By Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

PRE-SCHOOLS run in the community by parents were given a £6.5m lifeline yesterday as David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education, pledged high-quality provision for young children.

The package was announced by Mr Blunkett as playgroup organisers warned that hundreds of groups faced closure.

Last year the Pre-school Learning Alliance recorded 800 playgroup closures, largely because schools are scooping four-year-olds into their own nursery and reception classes.

A further 400 have closed so far this year and Margaret Lochrie, the PLA's chief executive, claimed that another 1,000 could be lost by the end of 1998.

"This is a waste at a time when more good-quality child care is desperately needed and when the Government is on the brink of launching a national childcare strategy," she said, as the PLA prepared a series of events in London - including lobbying Parliament and the presentation of a 150,000 signature petition.

Mr Blunkett, addressing the conference organised by the alliance yesterday, said: "Ensuring that we have high-quality provision for young children is a key government priority. The

social and intellectual development of children is at the heart of our policies on early education and childcare."

He said that he shared concerns that pre-schools were closing just as plans for expansion of childcare were taking place.

"We are allocating an extra £6m which will provide more than 10,000 extra childcare places integrated with early education for young children," he said.

"Pre-schools will be among the beneficiaries of this money. They will be able to provide "wraparound" care - care which extends to the whole day. It will also fund the setting up of new groups - some within primary school sites and school facilities.

"I am also making an extra £500,000 available to help good pre-schools which are in danger of closing ... The funding will give a breathing space to pre-schools to explore new opportunities for consolidating and extending their daycare and early-years education. It will help sustain those high-quality pre-schools at risk of closure."

He added: "We don't expect perpetual patience from you, but we do ... intend to get it right."

In place of the nursery vouchers' scheme thought up by the Tories, ministers ordered local education authorities to draw up Early Years Development Plans, working in co-

operation with private and voluntary providers. That has already created 60,000 nursery places, fulfilling a Labour pledge to provide a nursery place for every four-year-old. But the PLA says most of the new places are in schools and it remains sceptical, despite ministerial assurances, about local education authority partnership with the voluntary and private sector.

"The Early Years Partnerships are not working as well as they could to deliver resources to the voluntary sector - most four-year-olds are in reception classes - and this is the reason for the closures," said Mrs Lochrie. "The loss of one nursery is a waste; the loss of hundreds is carelessness."



Labour of love: Tony Blair smiling at the four- and five-year-olds from Hurley Pre-school, in Kennington, south London, who came to Downing Street yesterday with a birthday card and cake for the Prime Minister on his 45th birthday
Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

Dark practices mar song contest image

IT IS the squeaky clean music competition full of jolly ditties but this year it seems that a darker and altogether more murky side has developed to the Eurovision Song Contest, writes Kate Watson-Smyth.

Rumours that the Germans are planning to cheat have led to bookmakers William Hill slashing the odds of victory for their entry from 50/1 to 12/1.

"We don't believe the competition can be influenced in this way but we've taken so much cash for Guido Horn, the German contestant, that we have had to cut the odds on six occasions already and may even end up with it becoming a clear favourite," said spokesman Graham Sharpe.

Although not taken entirely

seriously in this country, the contest which gave rise to hits like "Boom-Bang-A-Bang" and "La La La" has a huge following in the rest of Europe and Germany has not won since 1982.

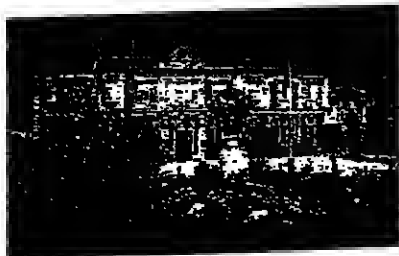
Hundreds of Mr Horn's fans plan to travel to Holland, Belgium and Denmark to vote for him on foreign soil. By doing so they hope to get around the rules which allow viewers to phone in for the winner but not for their own country.

But a spokeswoman for Eurovision said it was impossible to rig the voting.

The entry for Guido Horn and his band, the Orthopaedic Stockings is called "Piep, piep, piep, Guido loves you". On Saturday we will find out whether the rest of Europe loves him back.

THE INDEPENDENT

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Blair enters fray in local elections

By Anthony Bevis
Political Editor

PRIME MINISTER'S question time was turned into a platform for a local-elections hustings meeting yesterday, when Tony Blair faced a birthday barrage of Commons point-scoring.

Mr Blair, 45 yesterday, was offered a series of soft-ball questions about Labour's first-year record - allowing him to offer the voters much advice on today's poll for 4,174 councillors in London, shire districts, metropolitan districts and unitary authorities.

No elections are taking place in Scotland or in Wales, but the local elections coincide with a referendum on whether there should be a London mayor, and assembly, along with a by-election in the European constituency of Yorkshire South.

The elections will offer a first anniversary test of Labour's popularity, and party leaders have been busy preparing the ground for a low poll.

"The main enemy of the Labour Party is not any renewed enthusiasm for the Conservative Party, but complacency among

Labour voters," John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, told an eve-of-poll press conference.

The Prime Minister said on Capital Radio: "It's so important people come out and vote for the mayor in the referendum because if they don't vote for it, people won't get it. It's so important for London that we have a strong political figure able to tackle the issues that affect Londoners. Let's take the chance ... and make London in the millennium one of the great, exciting capital cities of the world."

In the Commons, David Crausby, Labour MP for Bolton North East, asked Mr Blair whether he was aware that Tory councils across the country had not passed on £2.5bn meant for education. "How can you ensure in these circumstances that our children all get a first class education?" he said.

Mr Blair told him there was a clear difference between Labour councils that had been passing the money on to their schools and Tory councils like Essex, "which was given an extra £27m and cut £6m from their education budget".

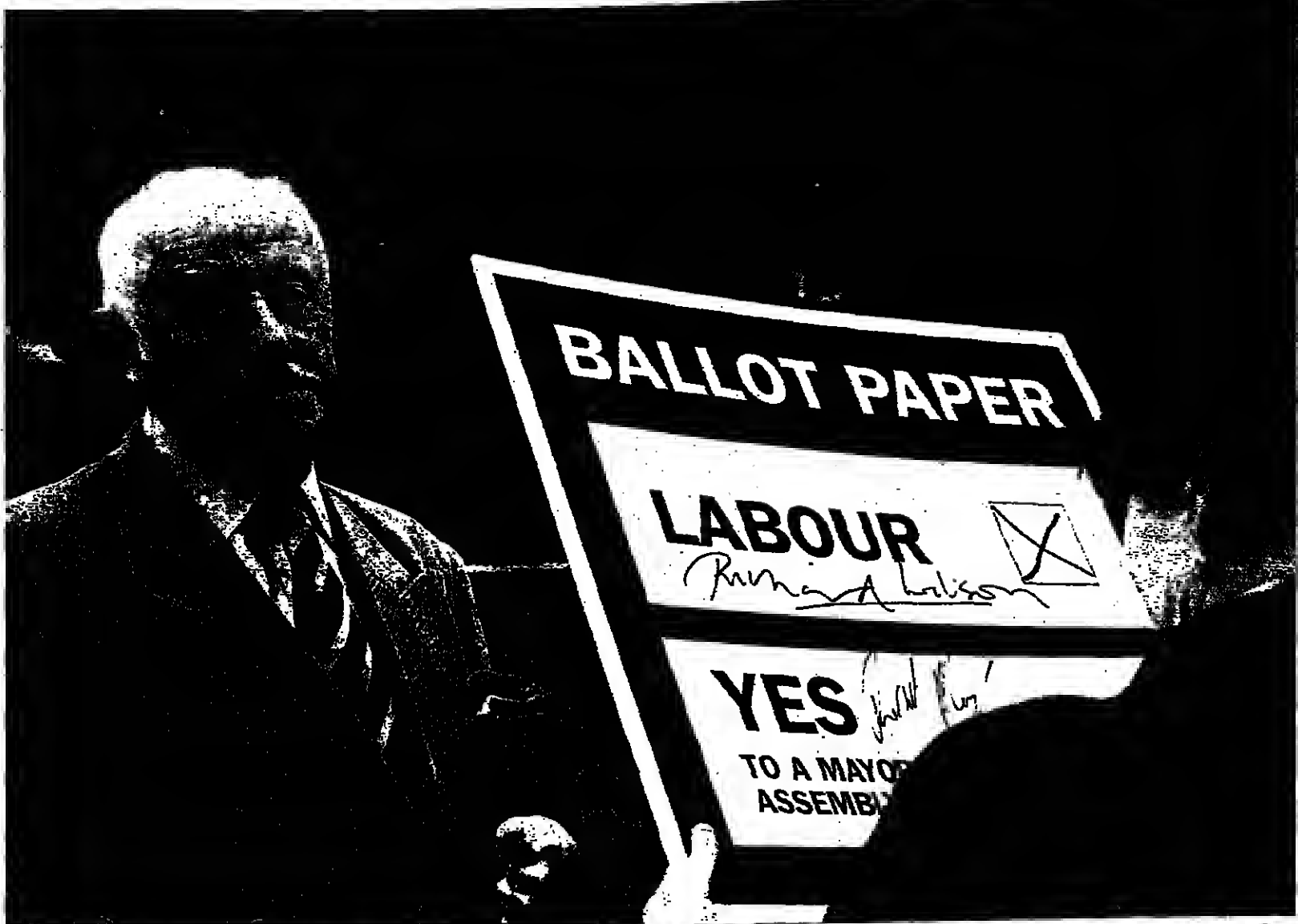
But Richard Ottaway, a Tory

spokesman on London, said: "In 1994, the Labour group on Croydon Council pledged not to increase the council tax for the life of that council. You speak a lot about partnerships between government and local authorities. Who is to blame for this broken promise - the Labour government or the Labour council?"

The Prime Minister said Labour Croydon had given excellent value for money, even within the spending limits laid down by the previous Tory government and since adopted by the Labour government.

Services being provided by Labour councils were significantly better than the Tories. "That's a matter of fact and another good reason why I hope people will support their council in Croydon tomorrow."

Mr Blair also told Derek Twigg, Labour MP for Halton, that there were 240 seats which the Tories were not contesting, but Lord Parkinson, the Conservative Party chairman, told a press conference the Tories had worked very hard and had a lot of very good candidates. "We expect to make gains," he said.



Supporting role: Richard Wilson, star of the television series *One Foot in the Grave*, at the launch yesterday of Labour's last day of campaigning for today's local elections; other attendees included John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister, and Glenda Jackson MP. Photograph: Andrew Buurman

Major abolished 'Chinese walls' on Tory funding

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

JOHN MAJOR could be called to give account to a committee investigating party funding after a former senior party official yesterday disclosed that the former prime minister had abolished the "Chinese walls" between big donors to the Tory party and the party leaders.

Sir Brian Wyldbore-Smith, a former director of Tory party funding, told Lord Neill's Committee on Standards in Public Life that Mr Major was wrong to order the treasurers to report on donations to Chris Patten, the then party chairman.

A committee source said Mr Major, who was in Ulster yesterday, could be asked to explain in writing his reason for the decision, after the evidence from Sir Brian.

Sir Brian denied that donations bought influence or honours from the Government, but he disclosed that he turned

down one donation from a foreign source who wanted to influence the choice of the secretary of state for defence.

Asked later whether it was from Saudi Arabia, or a Middle East source, connected with British arms sales, he told reporters: "I can't remember."

He told the committee there was no contact between the fundraising and the prime minister until around 1991 when it was decided by Mr Major that the treasurers should report to Mr Patten, who later became the last Governor of Hong Kong.

Professor Anthony King, a member of the committee, asked Sir Brian: "Why was that change made?"

He replied: "The only person who could answer that is the prime minister at the time. I suspect he didn't want to get involved himself."

Professor King said: "That meant that your Chinese wall crumbled?"

Sir Brian said: "It collapsed."

Sir Brian said he thought it was wrong that the treasurers should be asked to report to the chairman of the party to give details on fundraising.

"I did write to the senior treasurer [of the party] to say that I thought it was a great error."

He said the circumstances surrounding the donation by Bernie Ecclestone of £1m to the Labour Party, involving a row over tobacco sponsorship of Formula One motor racing, was "unfortunate - that is why treasurers should not have contact with the politicians; they could not influence in the same way."

He said the Tory party treasurers targeted expatriates for donations from abroad, but also accepted money from foreign businessmen who had business interests or votes in this country. They included businessmen in Hong Kong.

War between parties in Lords escalates

By Colin Brown

THE Government yesterday threatened the use of the Parliament Act to demolish the threat by Tory peers to use the House of Lords to block measures in the next Queen's Speech.

The growing hostility between the Government and the Opposition in the Lords shows that a complete breakdown is near to the Government's attempts to win cross-party support for its reforms to the Lords, which could lead to a constitutional clash between MPs and the Lords.

Viscount Cranborne, the Tory leader in the Lords, provoked a full-scale war of words when he threatened to use a Tory majority in the Lords to block government bills in protest at ministers' handling of Lords reform.

Lord Cranborne said ministers should "come clean" about their plans, which include, as a first step, removing the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the Lords.

Lord Richard, the Leader of the Lords, hit back yesterday by warning that the Government would use its ultimate deterrent to force the Queen's Speech through the Lords, if the Tories try to block it.

Lord Richard told a news conference at Westminster yesterday: "If the Tories are going to pretend we have not got a mandate for this reform, they are wrong. They can stop the Bill in the Lords."

"If the Tories want to play



Lord Cranborne: Ministers should 'come clean'

Lord Richard made clear his disdain for what he called Lord Cranborne's "blast" yesterday. He said it was like "sabre-rattling with a somewhat rusty sword."

"The idea that in 1998 and 1999 we are going to have another Tory hereditary peers versus the people row seems frankly ludicrous."

"The truth of the matter is that the Conservative Party have been playing with this issue since we started trying to get a consensus for it. This is the latest stage in their games play."

Lord Richard said the Tories were divided and could not make up their minds about the future of the hereditary peerage.

"Are the Opposition really saying they are going to wreck the whole of the Government's programme next year in order to protect the hereditary principle and their hereditary votes in the Lords? I find that very difficult to believe."

Lord Richard promised he had no plans to swamp the House of Lords with 1,000

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Starburst 'on edge of time' stuns scientists

By Charles Arthur
Science and Technology Editor

EVEN seasoned astronomers have been stunned by the discovery of a starburst that was, briefly, as bright as the entire universe — and constituted the most powerful explosion since the moment of creation in the Big Bang.

Any living thing in the same galaxy may have been killed outright. Fortunately for us, the explosion occurred almost at the edge of time, in a galaxy 12 billion light years away.

Over just a few seconds, a burst of gamma rays was emitted by some stellar event — which is still not understood — that released as much energy as our entire galaxy, the Milky Way, puts out in 200 years.

Professor Shrinivas Kulkarni, one of the team of scientists from the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) in Pasadena who made the discovery, said: "The energy released ... staggers the imagination."

Professor George Djorgovski, another member of the team, which today announces its discovery in the science journal *Nature*, said: "For about one or two seconds, this burst was as luminous as all the rest of the entire universe."

Gamma-ray bursts are mysterious flashes of high-energy radiation that appear at random and typically last only a few seconds. They are not visible to the human eye, but can be detected by radio telescopes.

No one knows what causes them, but astronomers generally agree they must be connected with the death of very massive, short-lived stars such as "neutron" stars. One theory being suggested for this latest

event is the collision of two neutron stars — which are enormously dense, dead stars which are not quite large enough to have collapsed into black holes. Neutron stars are so dense that a spoonful of material from one would weigh 100 million tonnes. Black holes are points of infinite density from which nothing can escape.

All gamma-ray bursts are immensely powerful, but none of the several thousand detected so far come close to the one described in *Nature*.

A British expert on gamma-ray bursts, Dr Ralph Wijers, from Cambridge University, said gamma-ray bursts were thought to occur only once every 100 million years in a galaxy such as ours.

However, if one did occur within even a reasonable astronomical distance from Earth, the result could be apocalyptic. The intense radiation would not be detected until it reached us, and then it would be too late. "People have speculated, for example, that nearby supernovae [exploding stars] can cause mass extinction, and gamma-ray bursts put out even more energy in a similar form," said Dr Wijers, adding that such bursts were "very rare".

Luckily the explosion, designated GRB 971214, was so distant that not even a blast as bright as the universe poses any threat to the Earth.

The light arriving from the gamma-ray burst would have started its journey when the universe, thought to be about 14 billion years old, was in its infancy.

GRB 971214 was first detected last December, by two orbiting satellites. As the afterglow from the burst faded, the Caltech team detected an extremely faint galaxy at its location.



Protect and survive: Environment minister Michael Meacher yesterday holding a noctule bat, which is native to Britain, to launch National Bat Week, organised by the Bat Conservation Trust. The week, which runs from 9 to 17 May, aims to raise awareness about bats, including the 11 British species which are vulnerable or rare. Events include a bat count across the country

Photograph: Kalpesh Lathigra

It's surprising what you can save at your local supermarket.



Her condition was so bad, that for the first few nights, volunteers took it in turns to sleep outside her kennel.

It took six months for Jade to recover, after which she remained with the rescue team for a further eight months.

Jade was found in a supermarket skip. Left among the rotting food and discarded bits of old packaging.

That she was found at all was a small miracle.

Half buried among the rubbish, she barely had the resources to move or make a sound.

Unable to stand on her feet unaided, she twitched involuntarily. She was badly malnourished, suffered from mange and had open wounds all over her body.

Taken into care by the Thornberry Pet Rescue Team, it was found she had also contracted distemper. A pitiful sight and dreadfully underweight for a Lurcher.

But recover she did and now lives happily in Norfolk. The only problem is she insists on sleeping on her new owners Chippendale.

Every day, unspeakable acts of abuse are committed against dogs in Britain.

And when such cruelty comes to light, it is often the local volunteer run rescue centres that tirelessly take on these poor mistreated animals.

It is they who nurse the animals back to health. It is they who find the pets homes where they will be cared for at last.

But it all takes money. Without income, a local rescue centre can't operate.

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Start date..... Expiry date.....

Signature

Name (Block caps please).....

Address.....

Post Code.....

Send to International Fund for Animal Welfare, Freepost TN 1454, Crowborough, TN6 2BR.

EB8107

Angina study may aid heart patients

SCIENTISTS are to investigate how chest pain may save the lives of heart attack victims, writes Jeremy Lawrence.

In the largest research study of angina (chest pain), 5,000 patients are to be recruited to investigate the effect of a new drug that mimics the chemical effect of pain on the heart.

The study, co-ordinated by the University of Glasgow, will include up to 100 hospital cardiology units and is expected to take three years. Patients will receive treatment for an average of 21 months.

The heart is known to initiate a protective response when the blood supply to it is restricted and not enough oxy-

gen is reaching the muscle, causing angina.

Known as pre-conditioning, this natural response reduces the damage caused by further or more serious bouts of oxygen deprivation.

Scientists believe that it may explain why heart attack patients with a history of angina suffer less tissue damage and have a better chance of recovery than patients with no history of angina.

In the study, Nicorandil, the first of a new class of anti-angina drugs introduced to the United Kingdom four years ago, will be given to half the patients, in addition to their usual drug treatment for angina.

DAILY POEM

On a Card from Christopher Smart to Dr Nares

By Christopher Smart (1722-1771)

Smart sends his compliments & prays
Health & long life to Dr Nares —
but the chief business of the card
Is "come to dinner with the bard,
Who makes a moderate share of wit
Put on the pot, and turn the spit.
Tis said the Indians teach their sons
The use of bows instead of guns,
And, ere the striplings dare to dine,
They shoot their victuals off a pine.
The Public is as kind to me
As to his child a Cherokee,
And if I chance to hit my aim,
I chuse to feast upon the game;
For panegyric or abuse
Shall make the quill procure the goose.
With apple-sauce and Durham mustard
And codling pye o'er-laid with custard.
Pray please to signify with this
My love to Madam, Bob, & Miss,
Likewise to nurse and little Pol,
Whose praise so justly you extoll,
P.S.
I have (don't think it a chimera)
Some good sound port and right Madeira.

Our poems today and tomorrow come from *Pembroke Poets*, edited by Robert Macfarlane and David Quentin. This anthology, published to mark the 650th anniversary of Pembroke College, Cambridge, consists of work by poets who have been members of the college, from Edmund Spenser and Thomas Gray to Ted Hughes and Clive James.

IFAW. Fighting against cruelty to animals throughout the world.

Is there really a famine in Sudan?

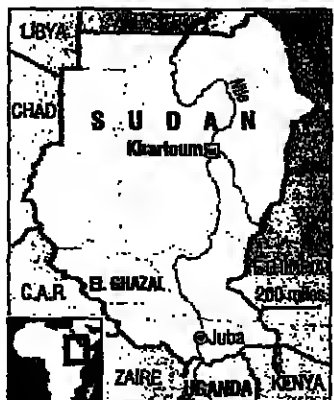
Not yet, claim British aid agencies who say the problem is over access not money, writes Jeremy Laurance

THERE IS no famine in southern Sudan, British aid agencies say there is a "food crisis" and some people are starving but they fear that a major appeal launched now could undermine efforts to raise money when a real famine arrives, possibly in a year's time.

A famine is defined as a shortage of food so serious that people are driven from their homes in a mass migration, as occurred in Ethiopia in 1984. Southern Sudan has suffered years of civil war and a current drought which has reduced people to scavenging for wild foods and leaves but it has not yet led them to leave their homes and support networks.

A consortium of 15 aid agencies known as the Disasters Emergency Committee agreed at a meeting two weeks ago not to launch an appeal in Britain. There was enough food and resources available for transport into Sudan and the problem was one of access, not money, they said.

The committee, which includes Save the Children, Oxfam and the Red Cross, ratified the decision again on Monday but said they would keep it under review. However, Christian Aid has launched its own appeal for £1m provoking dissent among the aid agencies.



The agencies have been caught unprepared because of the unexpected intensity of media interest in the situation. The BBC filed the first report seen in Britain early last month, but ITN later obtained more shocking pictures of emaciated children which were shown twice on News at Ten last week and again last night.

The BBC responded to what is now seen as a developing international story by dispatching extra teams to the area including the renowned reporter, Fergal Keane. Mark Bowden, regional director of Save the Children for East Africa, said: "There are places of acute need

all over southern Sudan but that doesn't mean the problems are all related. There is a lack of clarity. The media are getting into quite broad definitions of what is going on."

The worst affected area was El Ghazal, where 350,000 people were on the brink of starvation. However, thousands of tons of food and other aid had been promised by gov-

ernments and donor agencies and the Sudanese government had increased the number of flights allowed into the area from one to four. "That is just about enough," he said.

Mr Bowden said it was essential members of the public were acutely informed so that they could be confident when an appeal came that they knew what it was for and how the

money would be spent. "Personally I think it is irresponsible to appeal to the public at a time when we are still trying to define the problem."

A famine meant setting up feeding centres and relief shelters and could make a fragile situation worse by encouraging people to leave their homes and migrate to the feeding centres to obtain food. This was not

appropriate in Sudan where the priority was to stabilise the situation which would take at least 10 months and require sustained support.

A spokeswoman for Christian Aid said its officials were working in a separate area, closer to the Ugandan border and accessible by road, where food could be trucked in. She said the charity had not used the term

famine, but vulnerable people were dying. She dismissed suggestions that "famine fatigue" might set in if the situation worsened next year and another appeal had to be launched.

"That is something talked about ... But why wait till there is a famine? We want to do something now to prevent it happening. Do we want to see people dying? I don't think we do."



Victims of the crisis: A Sudanese woman holds her severely malnourished child as she waits for help within a feeding centre in Ajleip run by the French charity Medicines Sans Frontiers. The UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, has welcomed the Sudanese government's decision to allow more aid flights into the area. Photograph: Reuters

Germans protest over British charity's postcard campaign

By Louise Jury

BRITISH charity campaigners have been called to a meeting today by Germany's finance minister who has been upset by a postcard campaign criticising its attitude to Third World debt.

More than 15,000 postcards from Christian Aid supporters demanding greater support for debt relief have arrived at the German finance ministry in Bonn.

The rattled Germans have responded with an information offensive which contrasts its own cancellation of debts with Britain's. They have also asked charity officials to discuss the is-

sue today, Dr Jurgen Stark, secretary of state for finance, said: "Over the past few years, the amount of debt cancelled by Germany was five times as much as the amount cancelled by the United Kingdom."

Christian Aid launched the postcard campaign earlier this year criticising Germany's "reluctance to support measures that would provide sustainable debt relief for the poorest countries in the world."

The charity argues that Germany would not have recovered from the Second World War if it had been forced to service the kind of sums it now expects Third World nations to pay.

Germany is one of the countries aid agencies regard as particularly obstructive with regards to debt re-scheduling.

But Dr Stark has claimed the "obvious misperception" current among non-governmental organisations in the UK is "in flagrant contrast with the facts". He said the Christian Aid campaign missed the point by demanding more rapid debt relief.

A source at the charity said yesterday: "We think they are missing the point. Our basic criticism is not over which crumbs this country or that country has given, but that the existing deal for indebted countries is wholly inadequate."

Colombian innocents sacrificed in drug war

By Phil Davison
Latin America Correspondent

THERE were 200 of them, a small army, faces blackened, armed to the teeth and dressed in camouflage fatigues. Like the Colombian army's Special Forces, they wore Rambo-style headbands but the villagers of Puerto Alviria, in south-east Colombia, knew immediately they were not regular soldiers.

In a three-hour rampage, the gunmen pulled out a list, picked out a group of peasants and killed at least 21, shooting them in the back of the head, dumping some bodies into the Guaviare River, soaking others with petrol before setting fire to them. The body of one four-year-old girl was left in the village square, apparently as a warning to her family and the rest of the village.

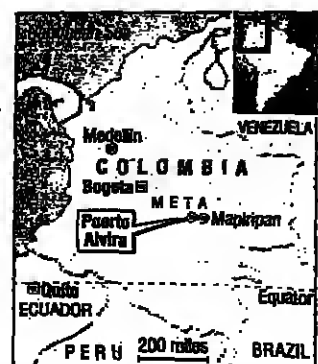
As they drove off in a convoy of military-style lorries, the gunmen warned villagers to leave Puerto Alviria within a week or they would return. They immediately packed up and started pulling out.

The gunmen were members of one of Colombia's growing right-wing paramilitary groups, set up by wealthy landowners and businessmen and often backed by the state armed forces. They had apparently decided to teach a lesson to villagers accused of aiding the Marxist guerrillas who control much of the surrounding countryside.

Monday's massacre is one of dozens over the past year, and it reinforced the belief of many

Colombians that the country is now in the throes of a civil war in which civilians - split between support for the guerrillas or the paramilitaries - are increasingly the victims. President Ernesto Samper, who can claim to control only a fraction of his country, prefers to call it a "dirty war".

It seems that the paramilitary group timed the latest massacre while the Colombian army was



preoccupied with other matters. The head of the US Southern Command, General Charles Wilhelm, was visiting military bases in south-east Colombia at the time, to study progress in eradicating narcotics production and trafficking.

A recent report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, spoke of "widespread terror among the civilian population in the face of selected executions and massacres ... carried out by paramilitary groups". The paramilitaries massacred more than 3,300 people during the first nine months of last year, it said,

while Marxist guerrillas killed 47 army soldiers and 166 civilians.

If the conflict started over ideology, it is now as much about money, and in the plains of south-east Colombia, money is about coca leaf, and ultimately cocaine.

The 12,000 Marxist fighters of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and 5,000 guerrillas of the National Liberation Army (ELN) have increasingly been financing their operations through kidnap ransoms, "war taxes" - protection money - or deals with druglords to protect coca fields from a government eradication campaign.

When the armed forces made little headway against the guerrillas, the paramilitaries sprang up in the Eighties to protect landowners from extortion. They are now thought to number around 2,000. Few Colombians doubt they receive protection and often logistics support from the military.

The man believed to head the paramilitaries, a wealthy northern landowner, Carlos Castano, is described by US officials as a major narcotics trafficker. President Samper has put a \$500,000 price on his head.

Lima (AP) - Thirteen survivors were found yesterday by rescue workers searching dense jungles for a charter flight that crashed in northern Peru with 87 people aboard. The Boeing 737, chartered by Occidental Petroleum to fly workers to the Andros oil field, crashed 625 miles north of Lima on Tuesday.

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هذا من الأصل

Netanyahu digs in his heels over US summit

By Patrick Cockburn
in Jerusalem

THE Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, said yesterday that he may not go to Washington for a summit next week, if attendance is conditional on Israel accepting American terms for the Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank.

"Am I obligated to accept every invitation on any condition?", he asked an interviewer from Israeli army radio. "I am ready to go, that's not the problem. But if they tell me to go and accept certain conditions unacceptable to us? We are a sovereign country."

Mr Netanyahu left the question hanging in the air, but the implication is that he will not endorse the United States plan for Israel to withdraw from 13 per cent of the West Bank as the price for attending a summit with President Bill Clinton on

11 May. A final decision will be taken at a meeting of the Israeli cabinet next Sunday.

Since he became prime minister in 1996, Mr Netanyahu's strategy has been to avoid confrontation with the US by showing willingness to talk endlessly, but not to agree to anything. At the same time he has succeeded in so watering down the Oslo accords that they bear little resemblance to their original form.

At the end of the meeting in London a source in Mr Netanyahu's office was quoted as saying: "The talks here have proven that the Prime Minister's strategic objective was attained. The Oslo process has come to a halt."

"Instead of transferring most of the territory of Judea and Samaria [West Bank] to the Palestinians within a year and a half, we're in a position where most of the territory will be in

our hands prior to the final status talks."

Mr Netanyahu can count on support from the US Congress where 81 Senators signed a letter last month calling on President Clinton not to put pressure on Israel. At the same time the repeated failure by the US to get Israel to fulfil the terms of the Oslo accords is damaging America's standing in the region.

Mr Netanyahu can probably get cabinet support for withdrawal if he tries. American officials were reportedly astonished that he came to London without authority from his cabinet to carry out further redeployment on the West Bank.

A sign of growing friction between Israel and the Palestinians came early yesterday morning when a 28-year-old Jewish seminary student was stabbed to death in the Old City of Jerusalem. He belonged to the Ateret Cohanim (Crown of the

Priests) settler movement which takes over Palestinian-owned houses in the city. He was killed as he walked to the Wailing Wall down the Via Dolorosa in the early hours of the morning. He carried a gun and fired one shot before collapsing. Later a Palestinian was reported to have tried to kill a soldier in Hebron, the town south of Jerusalem partitioned between Israel and the Palestinians last year.

A measure of the lack of interest in Israel over the London meeting is that television devoted more time to a report by the State Comptroller about the money extracted from the state by the ultra-Orthodox through their political clout. This causes great resentment among secular Jews, who feel discriminated against, particularly in the allocation of public housing. The report says: "In practice building was done only for the ultra-orthodox sector."

Lessons of Paris '68 forgotten by universities

By John Lichfield
in Paris

IN MAY 1968, French universities were overcrowded, bureaucratic, unimaginative, unambitious and treated their students like children. For these, and other less tangible, less personal reasons, students revolted and almost brought down the French government.

In May 1998, the French government has been presented with a damning report which states, in effect, that French universities are over-crowded, bureaucratic, unimaginative, unambitious and treat their students like children.

Few French commentators have dwelt on the irony of the timing of the report, drawn up by a committee headed by Jacques Attali, former adviser to President François Mitterrand. There has been a rich flora of books and articles studying the legacy of the May '68 revolution. But only one article - in the news magazine *Marianne* - has dwelt at length on the paradoxical, and generally malign, effect of the rebellion on French universities, where the revolt began.

One of the many slogans of May 1968 was "Selection, piège à cons" - "Selection is a trap for idiots". The educational reforms, and fashions, which followed were heavily influenced by this viewpoint. The baccalaureate, the equivalent of A-levels, which confers an automatic right to enter higher education, was simplified. The proportion of young people entering colleges of some kind exploded (it is now more

than 40 per cent, of whom more than one-third fail in the first year).

In the 1970s, many French universities offered unchallenging courses in which everyone was guaranteed to succeed. But much of French higher education remains plodding and fact-oriented.

Lucy Reid, a British undergraduate studying at the Sorbonne in Paris, is startled by the low standard offered by lecturers and accepted by students. "My lectures on Italian cinema are typical; they last for three

hours and consist of lists of films, facts and dates. Everyone writes down everything the lecturer says. There is no analysis or questioning."

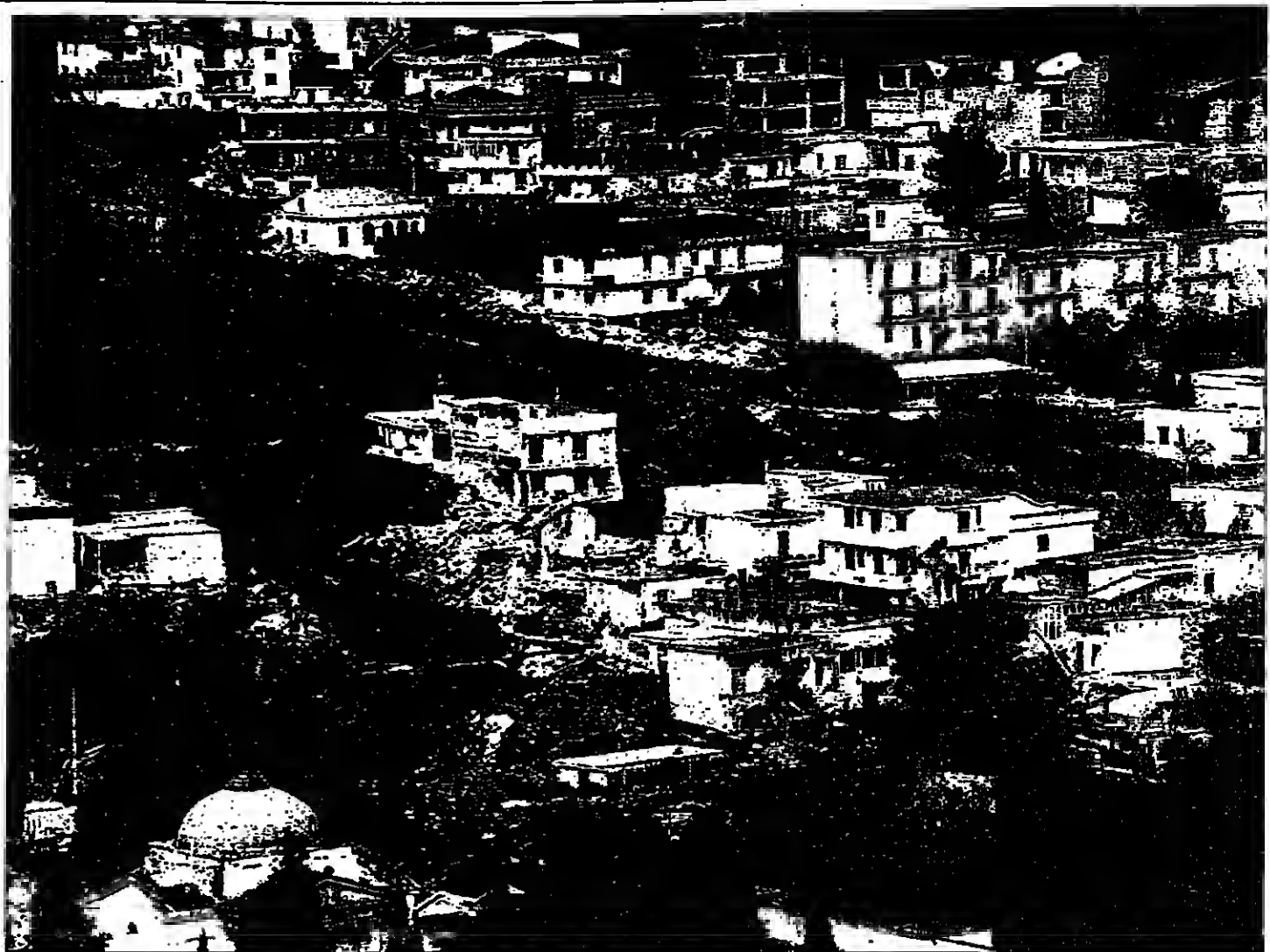
Paradoxically, the post-1968 dilution of French "université ordinaires" also led to a reinforcement of educational selection and elitism. More than ever, the "Grandes Ecoles", the network of state-run, top-class, specialist colleges, siphon off the best students, often from the wealthier families. The Grandes Ecoles take 4 per cent of the students and 30 per cent of the state budget for higher education.

At the apex of the system is the Ecole Nationale d'Administration, which takes the best students from the other Grandes Ecoles. Students who come near to the top of the class in ENA are catapulted into the commanding heights of French politics, administration and business. Many students who graduate from the run-of-the-mill universities - four out of 10 never do - find themselves with few practical skills and a "diplôme" which is little respected by employers.

The disparities have been increased in the past three decades, one egalitarian revolt compounding the contrary results of another. Mr Attali is himself a product of the system: he was a "pupil" at ENA while Paris burnt in 1968. His report proposes reforms intended to boost the quality of the bread-and-butter universities and close the gap with the Grandes Ecoles. Unless something is done, the report says, France is doomed "to slip little by little down the slope of irreversible decline".

Danny the Red takes it on the chin

Young people these days have no respect for anything, writes John Lichfield. Daniel "Danny the Red" Cohn-Bendit, leader of the May 1968 student's revolt, had two custard pies thrown in his face when he returned to his alma mater, the University of Nanterre, this week. Mr Cohn-Bendit, 53, now a German Green Euro MP, was "entrained" by a group of anarcho-syndicalist students who objected to his "betrayal of the cause" - his abandonment of revolutionary socialism for European federalism and environmentalism. "In our view, he is not the living witness of May 68 but its corpse," said one of the men involved. Mr Cohn-Bendit, who attended a seminar on the 1968 revolt,



An aerial view of the village of Sarno, near Salerno, yesterday, following mudslides and flooding after six days of non-stop rain in southern Italy. Environmentalists blamed bad land management for the deaths of 17 people who were swept away when torrents of mud coursed through villages in the Campania region, writes Anne Henley. Rescue services said dozens more people were still missing in the

sludge which engulfed towns along the valley of the river Sarno. "This disaster was totally predictable," said Alberto Fiorillo, a spokesman for the Legambiente environmental group who said tree-clearing and scrub-burning for building or pasture purposes had led to massive erosion in the Sarno valley, and throughout the Campania region. "Italy spends huge amounts of money patching

things up after disasters, but hardly any on prevention, and the little that is spent is spent badly; more often than not, it makes matters worse," he added. Over 1,000 people were left homeless in this week's flooding which occurred during what the Italian air force's meteorological department described as "persistent but not exceptional" rain. Photograph: Gino Fusco/EPA

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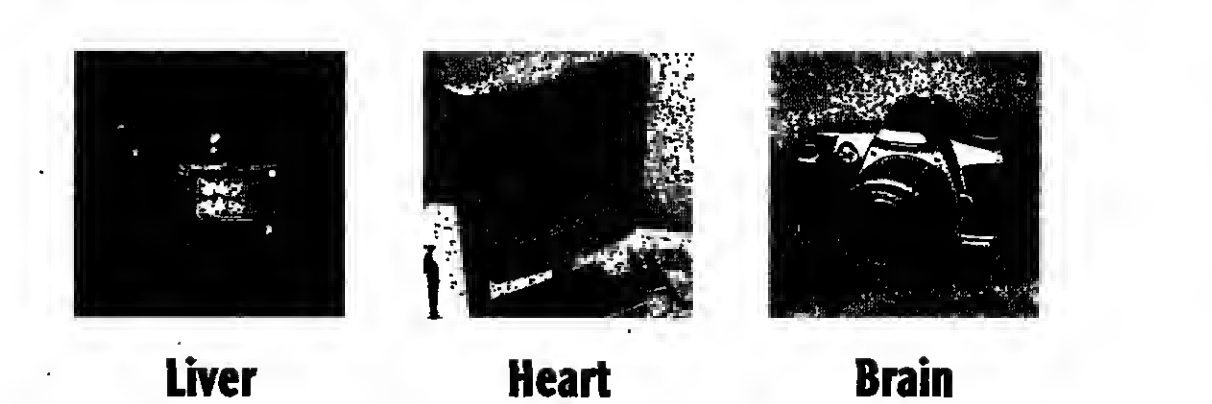
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Indonesian police kill six as riots worsen



By Richard Lloyd Parry
in Medan

AT LEAST six people were killed, and many more were wounded yesterday, as Indonesian police fired on protesters in the worst riots since the beginning of the Asian economic crisis last year.

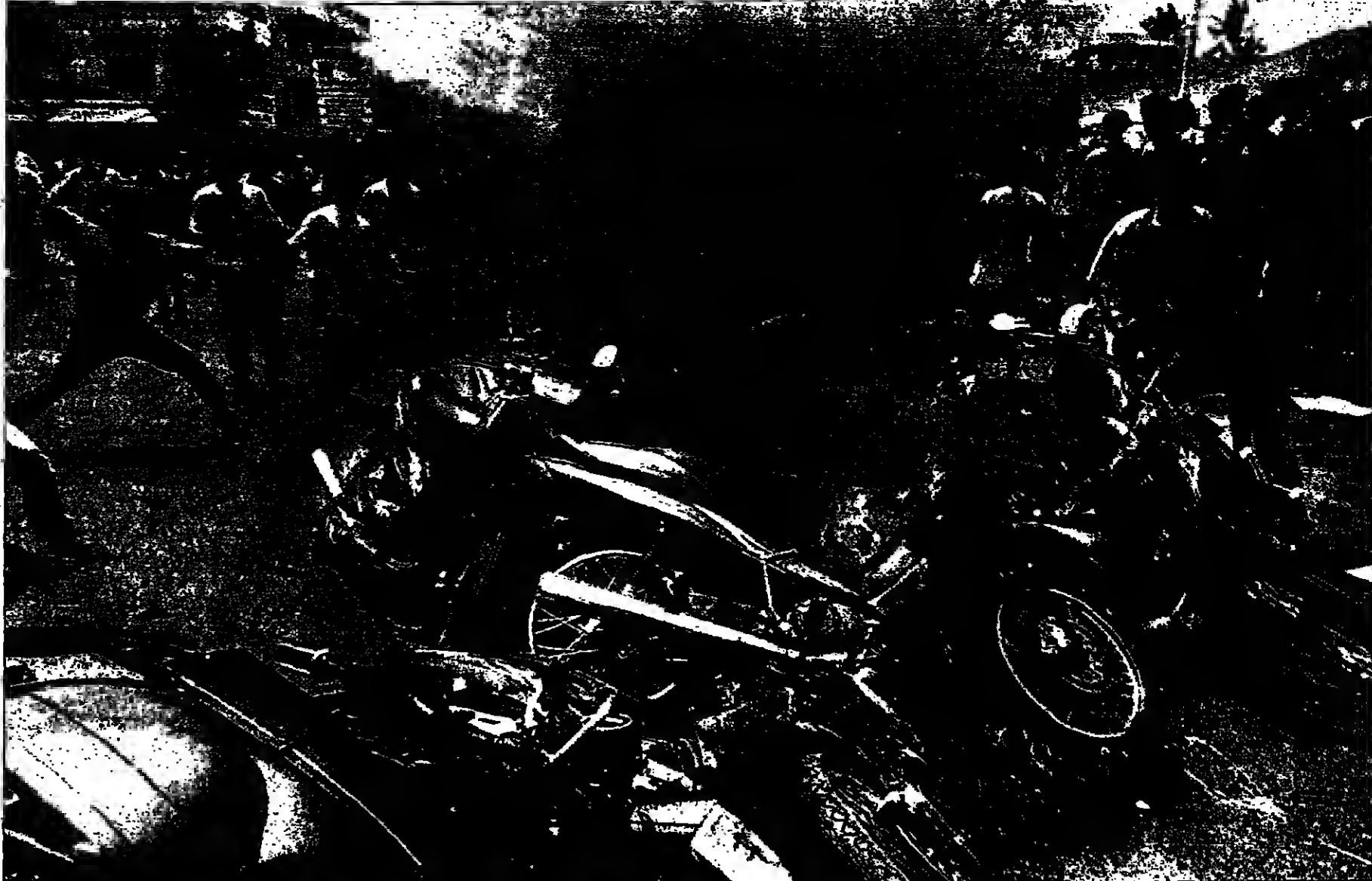
In Medan, the biggest city on the island of Sumatra, local reporters said that six people were killed in the third consecutive day of rioting. Several dozen others were injured, and more than 100 have been arrested after skirmishes between protesters and police who fired first rubber bullets and tear gas, and then live rounds into the crowds.

Cars and motorbikes were also set alight, as thousands of people, including university students and crowds from an evening football match, smashed shop windows and looted the contents. Witnesses said

that on several occasions police refrained from firing or intervening in acts of looting, and did not retaliate to taunting from the crowds. But a cameraman for Reuters television suffered bruises after being pushed into a ditch, by a policeman who pressed a pistol into his temple.

In Jakarta, police fired rubber bullets at students after they burnt images of President Suharto and threw stones, and violent disturbances were also reported at universities in Bandung, Yogyakarta, Surabaya in Java and in Ujung Pandang on Sulawesi island.

During a brief visit to Jakarta, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, noted the "particularly tense situation," and urged President Suharto to reform Indonesia's authoritarian political system. "I told the president that in my view the support of the international community would be greater if there were political reforms," he told



Rioters burning motorcycles taken from a Chinese-owned shop in Medan in Sumatra yesterday. Indonesia's wealthiest ethnic minority have been treated as scapegoats for the country's economic crisis which has caused a series of price rises, the latest being a 71 per cent increase in the cost of fuel. Photograph: Charles Dharapak

a press conference at the end of a three-day tour of South Korea, Malaysia and Indonesia. "There is no place for repression in any society... the political reform I'm talking about is something that would be supported across the international community."

But the minister responsible for security indicated that a military crackdown was imminent. Feisal Tanjung, former commander-in-chief of the Indonesian armed

forces, condemned "anarchy" in Medan and promised that "the government will take measures against people involved in this mass destruction and looting".

For most of the year, students have been holding demonstrations all over Indonesia, but the events in Medan mark a serious escalation of the situation, with potential consequences for the whole country. Until this week, police have largely managed to confine the protests to

the university campuses. In Medan, they have split out on to the streets and become dominated by ordinary working-class Indonesians.

This week, in keeping with economic reforms agreed with the International Monetary Fund, the government abolished subsidies on fuel oil and the price subsequently rose by 70 per cent. This has further affected the transportation cost of basic commodities.

The economic crisis has rendered

most Indonesian companies technically bankrupt. Many are laying off employees, and it is this increasing desperation which appears to be fuelling the disturbances.

So far, and despite Indonesia's dire economic situation, President Suharto's loyal power base within the army has allowed him to continue unchallenged. The political opposition is weak and lacking in confidence, and the student demonstrations have no national

leaders. The danger for the government is that working-class rioting, like that in Medan will spread to other cities - or that a violent incident will trigger popular outrage.

Earlier this week, 76-year-old President Suharto indicated that he would not even consider political reform before the end of his present term of office in 2002. Yesterday the Jakarta Stock Exchange, where Mr Brown gave a lunchtime speech, fell nearly 5 per cent.

Clinton mulls Lewinsky appeal

By Mary Dejevsky
in Washington

WHITE House advisers were yesterday mulling over whether President Bill Clinton should appeal a judge's decision that two of his closest aides must testify in the Monica Lewinsky case. The two, Bruce Lindsey, a long-time friend and legal adviser of Mr Clinton's, and Sidney Blumenthal, a friend of Hillary Clinton and media strategist to the President, had refused to answer questions about conversations with Mr Clinton on the grounds that they were protected by "executive

privilege" - the President's need, by virtue of his office, for confidentiality.

Their right to claim this protection had been contested by the independent prosecutor in the case, Kenneth Starr. A federal judge - in a judgment that represented a big setback for Mr Clinton - found for Mr Starr. She ruled that the prosecutor's need to uncover the truth outweighed Mr Clinton's need to keep White House conversations private. Mr Starr is trying to establish the truth of allegations that Mr Clinton had an affair with Ms Lewinsky, who was then a White House trainee, lied about it under

oath, and prevailed upon her to lie about it also.

For the White House to claim executive privilege on Mr Clinton's behalf was a risk, because the last President to do so was Richard Nixon, who persisted with his claim up to the Supreme Court, and lost.

Any White House appeal of the judge's decision would keep the story in the public eye, to Mr Clinton's likely disadvantage. On the other hand, an appeal would buy time for Mr Clinton in the Lewinsky case. There was still the possibility that Mr Lindsey could claim lawyer-client privilege to preserve the

confidentiality of at least some of his conversations with Mr Clinton about the case.

As the White House was weighing up the pros and cons, Mr Clinton's personal secretary, Betty Currie, was making her long-awaited second appearance before the grand jury in the Lewinsky case. Part of Mrs Currie's job was to function as gatekeeper to the Oval Office; she is also recorded as having authorised Ms Lewinsky's admission to the White House on numerous occasions after the former trainee was transferred to work at the Pentagon.

The one bright spot on Mr

Clinton's horizon came from Congress, where a Republican attempt to impeach the Clinton in possible malpractice rebounded badly. The senior aide to a House committee chairman resigned, and the chairman himself, Dan Burton, was under strong pressure to do the same after it emerged that edited transcripts of tape-recordings they had released had given a misleading impression of the contents. The edited version appeared to cast doubt on Mrs Clinton's role in the Whitewater affair, while the full version ruled out any wrongdoing on her part.

Guardsmen's letter may shed light on Vatican shootings

By Anne Hanley
in Rome

A LETTER sent from a tormented son to his mother may explain the motive behind the fatal shootings in the Vatican on Monday of the newly appointed commander of the Papal Swiss Guard, Colonel Alois Estermann, and his wife Gladys Meza Romero, by guardsman Cedrich Tornay.

But the Vatican has refused to divulge the contents of the letter, and Tornay's mother yesterday told Italian state radio that no letter had yet reached her.

According to the Vatican, Tornay handed the letter to a fellow guardsman 90 minutes before shooting Estermann and his wife dead in their apartment, then turning the gun on himself.

Tornay, 23, who had served in the Pope's personal security corps for three years, was bitter over reprimands from Estermann, and disappointed that he had not been included in the list of guards to be honoured in

a ceremony scheduled to take place yesterday.

That celebration was cancelled following the shootings. Instead, relations and friends of guardsmen, who had gathered in Rome, attended a Papal audience in which the Pope recalled Estermann's "great faith and his dedication to duty". They were also present for the funeral service for Estermann and his wife held in St Peter's basilica yesterday afternoon.

Rules forbidding church commemoration for suicide cases will be waived to allow a private funeral service for Tornay in St Anne's chapel inside the Vatican this afternoon.

In a press conference yesterday, Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro Valls said autopsies carried out inside the Holy See showed that Estermann suffered two bullet wounds through the head and shoulder, Gladys Meza Romero one through the left shoulder, and that a shot through the mouth had killed Tornay.

The autopsies, he said, confirmed the official sequence of events announced after the incident. The Holy See could now be "morally certain" Tornay had killed his commanding officer and his wife in a "fit of madness".

What the autopsies did not show was the whereabouts of the fifth bullet missing from the barrel of Tornay's service revolver.

Nor did they explain why a young man in the grip of a "fit of madness" should take time out to write to his mother, calmly hand that letter over to a fellow guard, and, according to Italian press reports, talk at length with his mother on the telephone, before bursting into his superior officer's home and opening fire.

If Tornay was responsible for the Estermanns' deaths, it would appear he had thought about it quite rationally. Until the contents of the letter are revealed, however, what pushed a highly trained professional soldier to such tragic lengths will remain a mystery.

Basque separatists kill fifth councillor

By Elizabeth Nash
in Madrid

A GUNMAN shot dead a conservative councillor from the northern Spanish town of Pamplona yesterday morning in an attack attributed to Basque separatists. Tomas Caballero, 63, was about to get into his car near his home when two men approached him and one fired two bullets to his head. The victim died shortly afterwards in hospital.

Mr Caballero, spokesman for the Navarra People's Union (UPN) group on Pamplona council, is the fifth local conservative politician to have been gunned down in the past year. His party is a regional ally of the ruling Popular Party. He had recently argued with councillors of the Basque nationalist Herri Batasuna party, supporters of the separatist or-

ganisation Eta. The HB councillors sued Mr Caballero for slander after he had accused them of "incitement to murder".

Yesterday's attack came moments after the Interior Minister, Jaime Mayor Oreja, announced the discovery of an Eta plot to kill King Juan Carlos. He said Eta planned to attack on the King during a visit later this year to the Basque city of San Sebastian. The plot, the third in recent years directed against the King, was uncovered during the interrogation of six Eta suspects arrested at the weekend.

Eta guerrillas had the King in their rifle sights in August 1995 during a failed assassination attempt on Majorca. Three suspects were convicted and jailed last year. Last October, police foiled a plot to bomb the Insular museum in Bilbao which the King was due to attend.

US reduces watch on Iraq

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton has decided the situation in the Persian Gulf has calmed enough to allow for a "temporary gap" in maintaining two aircraft carriers in the strategic waterway. One of the two carriers there, the USS Independence, is scheduled to leave the Gulf later this month. Because of a schedule change in the departure of a third carrier from the United States, the USS Stennis will be the sole aircraft carrier for about three weeks maintaining the watch over Iraq.

— AP, Washington

Kok heads for victory

THE Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok cruised toward a second term yesterday in general elections likely to strengthen his Labour Party's grip on parliament. With the Dutch economy growing strongly and unemployment at 4.8 per cent, Mr Kok's Labour-led coalition was expected to be reshuffled for a second term. Polls predicted Labour would raise its 37-seat holding in the 150-seat lower house to 46.

— AP, Amsterdam

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Pooh bear and Jeremy Fisher as you've never seen them before

LOST drawings of Winnie the Pooh and Christopher Robin by EH Shepard and Mr Jeremy Fisher by Beatrix Potter will go on sale at Sotheby's today.

They have been tempted out of obscurity by record auction prices fetched for other works by the artists - £78,500 for a Shepard at Christie's and £39,500 for a Potter at Bonhams.

Saved from the rubbish dump, the Potter ink drawing, one of seven featured in a letter she wrote in 1893 to a son of her former governess, is the first appearance of her famous frog - *The Tale of Mr Jeremy*

Fisher was not published until 1906. Her letter tells how Mr Fisher went fishing for minnows and pricked his finger on a stickleback. He got cross and went home and all the little fish laughed at him.

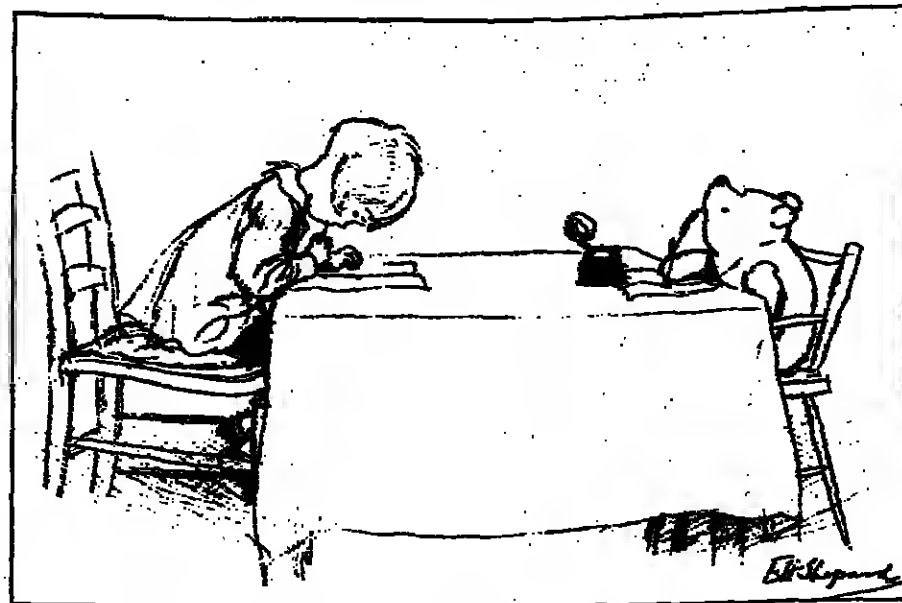
The last public appearance of the letter was at Sotheby's in 1947, when it fetched £50. Years later, it was rescued by a young girl in Connecticut, in the United States, from a box of books left to be dumped by the former owner of a house she had moved into with her parents. It is estimated to fetch £40,000.

The ink drawing of Pooh and Christopher writing letters - both pensive,

Christopher sucking a pencil and Pooh scratching his snout with a quill - is one of three drawn by Shepard for admirers. The owner remembers them from childhood, hanging in frames above the fireplace of his home near Chester. His mother was given them in the 1960s by a friend.

Unpublished Poohs lack the nostalgia value of those that were reproduced in AA Milne's books. Nevertheless, the drawing is expected to fetch £10,000 to £15,000 and another two, showing Pooh alone, £6,000 to £8,000 each.

John Windsor



Character studies: Jeremy Fisher (above) just escaped the rubbish dump, while Pooh and Christopher Robin (left) spent years hanging above a fireplace

First he took Manhattan

New York's glitterati turned out in force to see Howard Hodgkin's latest show, snapping up most of his work even before the private view had ended. By Paul Levy

DESPITE the noise made by the young Britpack of Damien Hirst, Rachel Whiteread and the Chapman brothers, the number of living artists from Cool Britannia who have really made their mark on the American art world's consciousness is few. David Hockney, of course, and also Lucian Freud, Richard Hamilton and Richard Long. The cultural traffic in the visual arts is mostly in the other direction. But with the opening of his new show of 13 paintings at New York's hottest commercial gallery, Gagosian, Howard Hodgkin has grabbed arty Manhattan's attention.

This is an important show for the 67-year-old painter, his first here since the large but not complete retrospective exhibition that began in 1995 in Fort Worth, then toured - impressing the hell out of his fans - to the Metropolitan Museum here, and then to Dusseldorf, before coming triumphantly home in 1997 to London's Hayward Gallery. Almost universally acclaimed, this touring show consolidated the critical reputation Hodgkin had achieved since he represented Britain in the 1984 Venice Biennale.

New York always has one art dealer with charisma. Currently that is Larry Gagosian, with two galleries: one Downtown, which allows him to keep up with the art-trend-spotters, and an Uptown 980 Madison Avenue space that used to be the old and old money Parke-Bernet gallery.

It is in the latter that Hodgkin's work is being shown until 13 June, and where there was a glittering private view last Thursday. Several collectors and would-be collectors were disappointed to find that almost all the pictures had been sold, as the museum and art world establishment sipped a little white wine and a lot of San Pellegrino with a good number of the artist's close friends and plenty of A-list celebrities. Sigourney Weaver, Irene Worth and David Hockney were the most familiar faces and they joined us on the coaches that took 100 guests to Gagosian's dinner afterwards.

This was only the first of the lavish but informal parties to mark the Hodgkin conquest. There was another on Saturday night, given by his London dealer, Anthony d'Offay, at the town house built for himself by architect Philip Johnson on East 52nd Street.

There, paying tribute to Hodgkin - by eating Glorious Food's potato crepes with goat cheese, served with a fine 1994 Meursault and baked red snapper accompanied, as Hodgkin prefers, with red wine (in this case a superb, still, red champagne, Bouzy Rouge) - were art-world luminaries Hockney, Elsworth Kelly, Brice Marden, Bill Viola, Kiki Smith and the dozen of New York art critics John Russell and his wife Rosamond Bernier, the celebrated lecturer on art.

A single, small, earlier painting by Hodgkin, *After Morandi*, hung in the foyer, and I understood that a collector, frustrated in his attempt to buy a picture at the Gagosian show, managed to put a reserve on this one before the woman seated to my left could indicate her own interest in buying it. There was not enough Hodgkin to go around.

For, by this time, there was a sort of aesthetic frenzy snapping up. The local reviews probably won't appear before this

coming weekend - the *New York Times* art reviews are carried in the Friday edition - but word-of-mouth has already done its stuff, and the gallery is crowded. ("I don't think that the daily reviewers matter to the people who buy Howard's paintings," an important museum curator said to me.)

You take the lift to the sixth floor and are stunned by your first sight of the single painting you see when you walk down the long white entrance corridor, *Bamboo* (1995-97) is not big, but this 24in by 27in rectangular oil painting on wood makes a disproportionate impact. You glimpse a deep, window-like perspective through the cobalt-blue painted frame, and your eye is drawn so rapidly into the lower right hand corner that, at first, you almost overlook the orange, red and brown brushstrokes, so wide and bold that they cover most of the picture plane and part of the frame.

Then you turn the corner into a room with six small paintings. The colours are so vivid and strong that it is a little like being in a walk-in jewellery box. Nan Rosenthal, a curator in the department of 20th-century art at the Metropolitan Museum, told me: "Quite apart from the Met show, this is Howard's most beautiful gallery show. He's at the top of his form - the consistent level of quality is amazing; every picture is so lively, so confident in its touch. I like seeing the larger-scale pictures, but, of course, he's always been wonderful at small-scale paintings, which few others are."

And in the small gallery at Gagosian there are some breathtaking pictures. *When in Rome* (1996-97) is oval (its centre panel was originally a small board belonging to a friend, which Hodgkin has enlarged to 24in by 19in). A homage to Roman baroque, the swirling brushstrokes create a trompe l'oeil effect that suggests you're looking sideways on at what is really a ceiling painting, and your glance recedes into a Tiepolo blue central passage.

Old Sky (1996-97) is one of the loveliest pieces in the show. Its amber and gold image bleeds onto a small gilded frame, making the viewer think at once of Turner or old Dutch skies. The ornate Chinese red painted frame of *Chinoiserie* (1994-97) reminds you both that Hodgkin can take a long time to decide that a painting is finished, and that he often begins with a found object

refers to a house in Italy (not a palace), is painted on a white ground, which means that the paint looks thinner and more diaphanous than usual. The brushstrokes are very broad, and you feel that you can almost reconstruct from the marks the order in which they were made, and so "read" the history of the painting, something Hodgkin's past work has perhaps deliberately kept secret. There are no labels, captions

have enjoyed hunting for some sort of drawing they were convinced (usually because of the titles) underlay the image, maybe giving the picture a narrative coherence. Hodgkin's new work reduces the temptation to indulge in this.

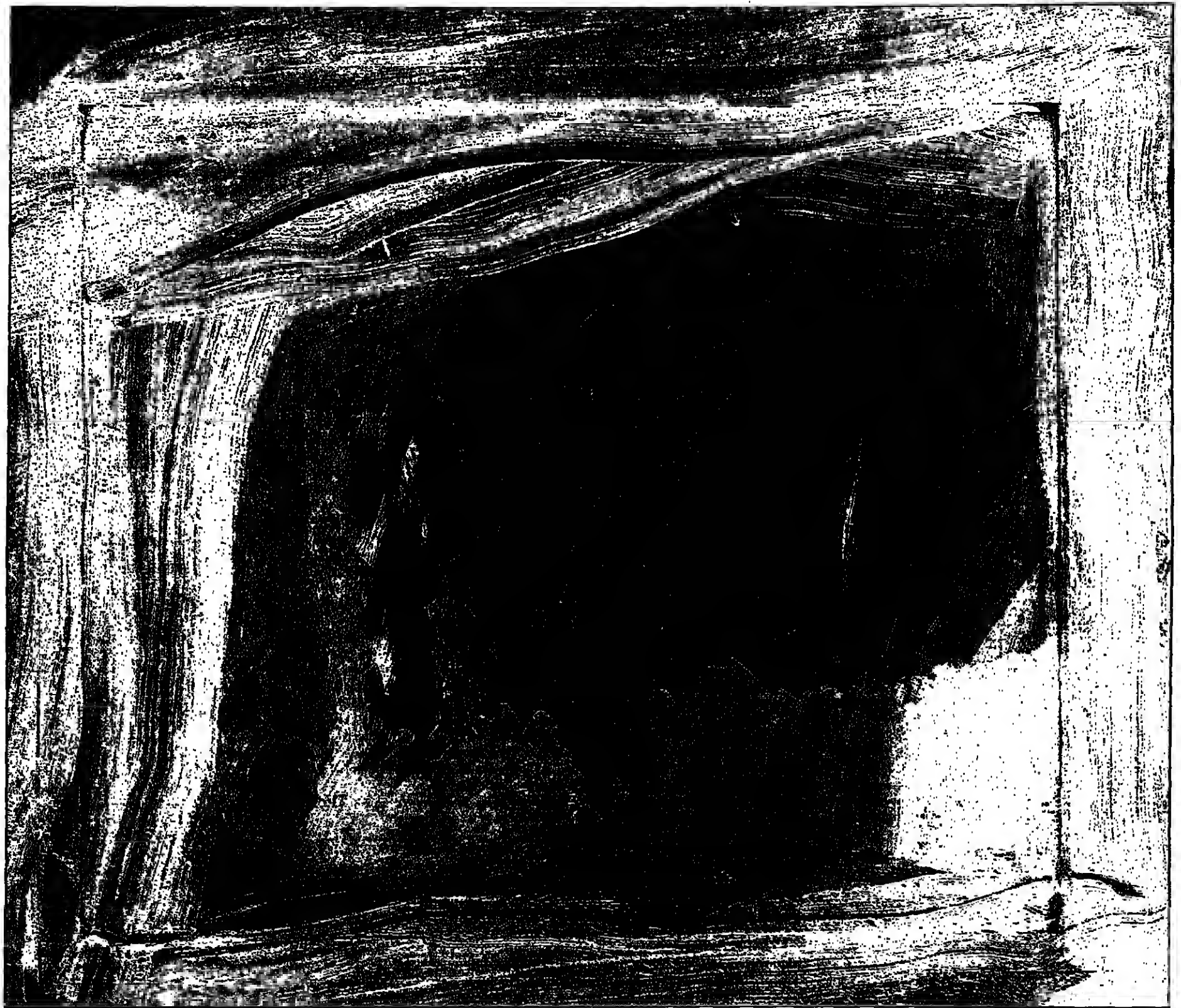
I think this is because of a new confidence in Hodgkin's current works. In most of them you can tell which is the final stroke of the brush. And in most cases this is wide, broad and

self-confidence is all: one slip of the brush and the work (in Hodgkin's case, usually of years) would be ruined.

Hodgkin's collectors are special types, almost a club themselves. I asked Norman Finkelstein, a brash, outspoken, Yale-educated (in music) New Jersey surgeon, who, with his brother Fred, owns no fewer than six Hodgkin paintings what he thought of the show and why he collected Hodgkin. Dr Finkelstein shared the universal high opinion of the show, and answered my other question thoughtfully: "The colour, of course, and the energy. But in all Howard's pictures - to quote my old art history professor's view of Greek vases - through the image there emerges an enveloping and warm humanity."

"Lyrical and heroic," said a Russian writer friend, and I see what she meant. The colours sing, the forms and shapes move so much they practically dance, the brushstrokes are so bold they are thrilling. And there is heroism, too. In the face of today's minimalism and installation art, Hodgkin's work emphatically affirms the central place of painting.

Howard Hodgkin's next show will be in Berlin in November. His next London exhibition will be at the Anthony d'Offay Gallery in autumn 1999.



Picture from an exhibition: 'In Mirza's Room' (1995-8) by Howard Hodgkin (below left). His current works reveal a new confidence. Photographs: Bruce Bernard/Anthony d'Offay

Turn the corner into a room with six small paintings. The colours are so vivid and strong that it is like being in a walk-in jewellery box



like this frame, the oval board, or the mouldings that came from a church, which have been used to make a frame for the large picture, *Andrew Allfree* (1994-98).

One of the larger paintings of the six in the main gallery is revolutionary for Hodgkin in this regard. The most recently finished one, *Rain at Il Palazzo* (1993-98), has no frame. Moreover, this picture, whose title

or even numbers on the walls in this show, though a sheet with titles, dates and dimensions is available, as is a fine catalogue. Titles remain important when looking at a Hodgkin - some references are so concrete they contain people's names or indicate locations. It is the titles that remind you that Hodgkin does not regard himself as an abstract artist. In the past, scholars, critics and collectors

looks as though it has been applied rapidly. "The brushstroke seems looser," says Rosenthal, "on the whole very unlaboured. He seems able to resolve things more quickly for himself. There is energy in these pictures, rather than conspicuous studiedness." I was very struck by some correspondences with some calligraphic works in the great China exhibition currently here at the Guggenheim Museum. Artistic

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You couldn't make it up. But the TV producers did

Why let the facts
get in the way of a
good story?
Paul McCann
discovers how the
truth isn't enough

LIFE is no longer exciting enough for television producers. Confessional chat shows, docu-soaps, and now, it seems, award-winning investigations are no longer factual programmes. Instead, our TV screens are proffering us real life – but with a twist. Non-fiction is served up, mixed with fiction. Or, as Alan Clark might put it, the people who make the shows have become “economical with the actualité”.

The most shocking example of combining fiction with fact is the alleged decision by an award-winning Carlton documentary team to fake a programme about Colombian drug-smugglers. In recent months two other documentaries: *The Driving School* on BBC1 and Channel 4's *Cutting Edge - Rogue Males*, have been revealed to contain faked scenes. Those involved in such programmes are (perhaps not surprisingly) reluctant to talk on the record.

The BBC admitted that scenes in *The Driving School*, including one in which the infamous Maureen Rees wakes her husband up at 4am to test her on the Highway Code, were faked. It may, with a second thought, seem blindingly obvious that a camera crew didn't hunker down in Maureen's bedroom every night waiting to catch the scene, but documentaries do claim to be real life. There was also a suggestion that some of her minor car crashes might have been pre-planned.

Channel 4 was even more embarrassed in February when a *Cutting Edge* documentary supposed to be about a group of “ducking and diving” cowboy builders was exposed as being largely a reconstruction of the men's claims. Some characters who appeared to be strangers actually knew each other. Three of the characters had been seen in a previous documentary: one who appeared was said to have “roped in a few mates” for the programme. Blushing Channel 4 could only say at the time: “There was an element of reconstructed truth of sorts, but there is not a documentary around which does not have an element of that in it.”

It seems that in the case of *The Connection*, the soap-doe's casual attitude to the verité may have flowed from the popular fly-on-the-wall genre to the supposedly serious world of undercover investigations.

“There is a distinction between making use of the grammar of television and making things up,” says the producer of



Film-makers should pause for thought

MOST regular viewers will have suspected some time ago that British television has been corrupted by the narcotics trade. It tries to get along without the easy high of menace and machismo offered by drug documentaries, but it just can't kick the habit. Wait for long enough and you're sure to find more grainy footage of furtive deals or interviews with concerned policemen.

But few viewers can have realised to what lengths the addiction would drive some documentary makers. Revelations about the extent to which Network First's award-winning film *The Connection* was synthesised indicate just how desirable such stories have become – and, as with drugs, if you

can't score the real thing you can always try to grow your own.

Viewers might not realise but compression and reconstruction are the staple building blocks of modern documentaries. On any evening of the week it would not be hard to find films which compress extended events into a neater chronology or which arrange to have real occurrences re-enacted for the camera. Indeed, it would be virtually impossible to find films in which such accommodations are not employed.

The problem is that the professional's notion of probability and that of the audience have drifted apart. Talk to documentary makers and you encounter two principle defences for any departure

from straightforward observation.

The first is the Higher Truth argument, by which any tampering with unsatisfactory actuality is defended on the grounds that it merely compensates for the deficiencies of the camera. If people are unlikely to commit crimes in front of a film crew then, the argument goes, it is entirely legitimate to reconstruct such a crime so it can be represented on screen.

The second is the Sophisticated Audience argument, which insists that television viewers are now perfectly aware of the manipulations involved in all documentary – and if the viewer already knows that a film offers a manufactured version of reality then there is no need to

distract them further with captions distinguishing the real from the reconstructed. In fact, – as Channel 4's *Right to Reply* regularly demonstrates – audiences continue to take a purist line on such matters. This belief in the authenticity of all they see is sometimes ingenious but it is not discreditable.

As the Network First case suggests, it may be time for documentary makers to become more simple-minded themselves. “The Connection” is not a monstrous anomaly among British documentaries, it is an extreme example – which should make all filmmakers pause for thought.

Thomas Sutcliffe,
TV critic

one of TV's most successful soap-does. “Undoubtedly if you film someone getting into a lift and then cut to a shot of the lift doors closing from the inside, you've interposed, in reality, to move the story along. It's also acceptable to re-shoot scenes because of technical problems. My personal benchmark is would this have happened anyway? If so we can re-shoot it.”

In some soap-does, characters will talk straight to camera to explain the context of scenes, sometimes a narrator will do it. In the more dramatic docs, a bit of exposition through faked dialogue is also used to move things along.

But it is not just the film-makers' tricks that viewers need to be wary of. Many producers talk about dull and listless

members of the public coming to life when a camera appears. The most notorious example was the BBC's film about the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool. As one rival producer puts it: “Every time the film crew appeared in *Hotel*, someone got a bollocking.”

The propensity of the public to act up for the cameras has been taken to its logical extreme

in the studio confessional shows where professional guests are now a regular feature.

Dave Smith, a 39-year-old unemployed man from Colchester, admits to having appeared on more than 20 daytime chat shows, including *Kilroy* and *The Time, The Place*. Once he pretended to be a loan shark and on another occasion a man who fantasised about

killing his wife. “I did it because I got a kick out of it and I wanted to break into TV,” he explained. “I've got my mates doing it too now. We get put up in £200-a-night hotels and once we can run up a £400 bar bill.”

Mr Smith believes that some TV researchers, who are desperate for dramatic guests, have suppressed their suspicions of him in order to get him on their show. However, after appearing at the Edinburgh Television Festival last year to explain his hoaxes, the *Kilroy* show owns rings him at home if it suspects he might be on the guest list, using a pseudonym.

Kilroy has suffered other embarrassments: last year it was censured by the BBC after a hoaxer appeared on the show claiming to be a paedophile.

The standard explanation for television producers' deceptions is that the competitive pressure for ratings now means real life is not dramatic enough. However, some think that in the case of *The Connection*, pressure to get ratings was combined with old-fashioned journalistic ego. One award-winning producer for Channel 4 said: “The programming heads only want sexy subjects like crime and drugs, so you can imagine the programme-makers pitching this great story to ITV and then discovering that their only contact was a Colombian waitress. Rather than go back and admit defeat, it looks like they just made it up.”

The children forced to do man's work

WHEN you first meet Charles Anderson, he seems an ordinary schoolboy: working hard for his A-levels, enjoying life with his friends. But Charles once had another life in the fields of Keoya, earning a pittance, afraid of being beaten for not doing his job. Now, he is 19; when he was first a coffee picker he was just seven.

The plight of boys like Charles was highlighted yesterday when an unusual petition, made up of thousands of footprints, was handed in to 10 Downing St as part of a global campaign against child labour. Schoolchildren from across the UK and Ireland have drawn around their feet to show support for the campaign.

The Global March Against Child Labour began in the Philippines. Its next stop is the International Labour Organisation Headquarters in Geneva, at the start of June, where a new agreement to outlaw the most exploitative forms of child labour will be discussed.

When Charles began his working life, he was paid just 10p a day for picking coffee. His mother received 30p for the same work. “My mother was a single lady and we lived in a shanty town,” he says. “I also worked in a quarry, breaking stones and loading them into vehicles.”

Charles was forced to leave home by a stepfather who regularly beat him. “In our community, single mothers were shunned and by way of punishment they were forced to live with an older man.” When the beatings became too much, he went to live with his grandmother. He still had to work in the fields. Theo his grandmother fell ill.

“I desperately needed to earn enough money from working in the fields to pay for medicine for her, but I failed to do so and she died,” he said. After her death, Charles had nowhere else to go and was forced on to the streets of Nairobi. “I just walked out one morning and went to look for a job to get some money for food.”

Life on the streets was even harder. “I picked up plastic bags, papers and other things that could be sold to the re-

cycling industry but none of it paid enough and I ended up begging,” he says. “We often ate food just picked out of the gutter, even if it was three days old, because if you did not eat, you died.”

Four years ago, his luck changed. He met Pat Botwright, from Norfolk. She had moved to Kenya in 1993 to set up an orphanage for street children in Nairobi. She gave Charles a place at the Covenant House Family Unit and his first opportunity to study.

“It was only when I went to the orphanage at the age of 16 that I slept on a mattress for the first time.” Last September, after passing seven O-level standard qualifications, he came to England to study for A-levels in business studies, economics, European history and geography at Bedford Modern School.

“It is only due to the grace of God that I am now studying here after all that happened to me in Kenya,” says Charles.

While he supports the Global March, he has no illusions about what is required to eradicate child labour – and that is economic change. “If wages don't increase for people then children will always be forced to earn money. If members of my family had been paid a proper wage, then I would not have had to work.”

As well as hoping for a favourable convention at the ILO, march organisers are seeking other measures that will lead to the eventual outlawing of child slave labour. British companies are being urged to adopt independently monitored codes that preclude goods that have been produced by exploiting children. States are also being pressed to strengthen and implement their national laws on child labour, and compulsory education, in accordance with the international conventions on the rights of the child.

All of the global marchers hope to outlaw the type of situation that has led to so many children like Charles Anderson spending their lives labouring on the streets rather than in the classroom.

Paul Donovan



New life: Charles Anderson at school in Bedford
Photograph: Rui Xavier

DILEMMAS

You may think your Internet affair is harmless. It isn't



**VIRGINIA
IRONSIDE**

THERE are two schools of thought about flirting. One is that it's safe, it's fun, everybody does it, and it's harmless, just giving two people a little kick – no more dangerous than sharing a glass of champagne. But the other school of thought is that it's risky, that once you open the door a crack and get a foot inside, you may no

Angela's happily living with her boyfriend. But she's been talking to people on the Internet and has become close to one. They are having kisses and hugs and even more – though they've never met. Is she betraying her boyfriend?

longer have any control over the situation.

Of course, if you flirt with an actual person who's present in real flesh and blood there are extra dangers. It's easy to touch and to risk that electric spark igniting between you. But because of the very risk, it doesn't often happen and flirting's kept to meaningful looks and saucy

comments. But on the Internet, because the risk of real contact appears so slight, it's easier to get carried away. I think Angela's playing a dangerous game.

For a start, who knows that this man won't one day suddenly take it into his head to get a ticket from Brazil, or wherever he lives, and suggest a meeting at Heathrow Airport? What would Angela do then? After all, safely married men can get divorced and suddenly start coming on in earnest, and even long-term prisoners, who might be thought to be fairly remote, can suddenly get years off for good behaviour and turn up on your doorstep.

I once started a correspondence with a man who lived in Kenya. It wasn't a flirtation but rather an intense friendship. Imagine my horror when he turned up in Dover, demanding to see me. Imagine my greater horror when he got married, went straight into a

mental home, and started ringing me up at the magazine where I worked telling me about the strange voices he heard. Imagine my even greater horror when I opened the paper and found he had been had up for a random murder and was now on his way to Rampton. It taught me a hard lesson.

Who knows that this man Angela's involved with won't turn into a stalker, someone who gets obsessed by her? Or, worse, her own obsession with this man may have an effect on her and her boyfriend's relationship.

A friend of mine, who developed what she thought was an innocent, but overwhelming, crush on a father at her daughter's school, was baffled because her own husband suddenly started having violent rages. It didn't occur to her that at some level this poor man had caught on to what was up, and was reacting against her faraway looks, her preoccupation with dressing

up to the nines at 3.30pm every day, her withdrawal into herself and her fantasies.

And, finally, Angela should ask herself what she would feel if she discovered her own boyfriend was having an Internet “affair”. If she feels she could live with him writing how his body feels when pressed against another girl's, that he gets an erection just at the thought of turning on the computer, that he can feel her tongue in his mouth, then that's fine. But she'd be a funny bunny to feel happy about a relationship like that. She is betraying her boyfriend. She knows it, too, or she wouldn't be asking the question. She should stop at once.

READERS' REPLIES

My boyfriend met someone through the Internet and I think Angela's playing with fire. He went to meet her and

they had an affair. It came to nothing of course, but by then it was too late. I could never trust him again. He now begs me to come back but my feelings for him have changed. Angela should stop this relationship immediately
Anon

There's nothing harmful in this. It's a normal, healthy way of living, and as long as Angela over actually takes her Internet relationship further, no harm can come of it.
Brian Elder, Edinburgh

I do not think that Angela is

betraying her boyfriend. Rather than she might be betraying herself. I would ask why she needs e-mail hugs and kisses. Does her real-life boyfriend not give her enough kisses and hugs? Has she communicated her needs to him?
Nicholas E Gough, Swindon, Wilt

NEXT WEEK'S DILEMMA

My husband works away abroad for a month and returns home for two weeks. I find it increasingly hard to cope. When he returns he insists on being the Man about the House, disrupting my routines, and disciplining the children about things that never bother me.

Last time he was here he insisted on exchanging our big, reliable, old banger for a new one, which doesn't suit me nearly so well as it only has two doors. Having created uproar, he then goes away leaving me to pick up the pieces

My social life is nil, too, because when my husband's home he wants to see me alone all the

time, but when he's away I long for friends but can never maintain them.

If we lived together all the time I'm sure things would settle down. But how can I cope with such a peculiar life? Does anyone else have this problem?
Diane

Letters are welcome, and everyone who has a suggestion quoted will be sent a bouquet from *Ironside*. Send comments and suggestions to Virginia Ironside at the Features Department, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL (fax: 0171-293 2182), by Tuesday morning. If you have a dilemma of your own that you would like to share, please let me know.

Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister

THE INDEPENDENT

ADDRESS: 1 CANADA SQUARE, CANARY WHARF, LONDON E14 5DL
TELEPHONE: 0171 293 2000 OR 0171 345 2000
FAX: 0171 293 2435 OR 0171 345 2435
THE INDEPENDENT ON THE INTERNET: WWW.INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Coup plot Cook never noticed

DOES Robin Cook know what goes on in his own department? He would like us to think that he doesn't have a clue. If Mr Cook does know what the Foreign Office gets up to then he would be aware that officials had conspired at a British firm of "military consultants", Sandline Ltd, supplying arms and mercenaries to support a coup in Sierra Leone. These activities breached a United Nations resolution and a European Union arms embargo. They are not immediately recognisable as elements in an ethical foreign policy. The affair is now subject to a criminal investigation.

Given all that, it is easier to understand why Mr Cook is so emphatic about his ignorance. In the Commons yesterday, he made categorical denials of ministers' knowledge of, or involvement in, these events. This means that civil servants and diplomats must have conducted an audacious cover-up. It implies that they made sure that neither Mr Cook nor any of his ministers knew that the deputy head of the FO Africa desk, Craig Murray, had met representatives of Sandline in London. They also ensured that their political masters did not know about the British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone's meeting with officials from Sandline before the coup. The Foreign Secretary was left unaware that 30 tons of arms were flown from Bulgaria to Sierra Leone by Sandline in February.

In short, we are invited to believe that, to adapt an old joke, Mr Cook has been treated by his staff as a sort of political mushroom - kept in the dark only to find himself now covered in the rich manure of political embarrassment.

There will now be a number of inquiries into the affair. Mr Cook has promised his full co-operation. We hope that public servants will not be used as scapegoats. It is certainly worth mentioning that the regime that they helped to oust in Sierra Leone was brutal and despotic even by Africa's standards. They may have had the best of motives for their actions, which will no doubt be taken into account. If no evidence that links ministers with Sandline emerges then that may be the greatest service they could have performed for their master. Mr Cook will not be the first politician in history to prefer to plead guilty to a charge of ignorance rather than one of complicity.

Londoners must vote for a credible mayor

HOW MANY people vote in today's London referendum on the plan for an elected mayor matters as much as where they put their crosses. No wonder Tony Blair has been drumming up support and Environment Department officials allowing smiley faces on ballot papers to count as a "yes". If the pundits are right and polling stations see participation at usual local government levels - 40 per cent or less - it will be hard to claim full endorsement for the plan. The Government says the referendum is only advisory - it will proceed regardless of the size of the vote. But how hollow the thing will look if Londoners stay away. Any future claim to legitimacy by a mayor - especially in his or her inevitable battles with Whitehall over money or powers - is going to be vitiated to the extent the electors choose to express indifference today.

The Government's plan for London is far from perfect. It runs the risk of spreading a luxuriant new foliage of office-holders and advisers above the boroughs. At the same time the mayor may be impotent; the Treasury has ensured there is no financial Viagra around. This will be a mayor whose financial discretion is limited to the scrapings of parking charges. Yet the main issue for most Londoners is transport investment and pricing. In principle a determined mayor would be in a position to lobby, to streamline, to plan. In practice the purse strings are going to be tied tight; already a major option - privatisation of the Tube - has been ruled out by John Prescott. Still, the very existence of a figure able to see how policies for parking, buses, trains, housing and employment intersect must be welcome. Those who argue that the existing machinery broadly works miss the fact that it operates in semi-privacy; Londoners are alienated from the authorities operating in their name.

Which makes it all the more necessary for them to turn out and vote. In Scotland, an expression of the "settled will" of Scottish residents was required - no one doubted it was obtained in last year's referendum. The Welsh margin was slimmer and the momentum behind plans for the Principality correspondingly reduced. If Londoners cannot be bothered, it will be very hard to muster the enthusiasm which the actual contest for mayor in two years' time ought to stimulate.

New men, real men

NEW MEN, it seems, are having a hard time. Rather than be persecuted for their lack of blokishness, they've been living double lives and they're finding the stress too much to bear. When they have to take time off work to look after their children they invent excuses about power breakfasts or the Territorial Army or, heaven help us, having to run a marathon. That way their mates still think of them as real men.

Well, the NSPCC has decided to do something about this with a "Meo as Fathers" conference to study and heighten awareness of this phenomenon. Laudable though this is, it will take more than a conference organised by a charity to change society's assumptions. All of us have to think about the value we place on a father's involvement with his children. So next time a male colleague arrives a little late and offers the excuse that he's been out on an assault course, just tell him - fatherhood is undervalued and new men are cool.

THE IRA COME OVER ALL DEMOCRATIC.....



LETTERS

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number
Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Keep the pound high

Sir: The Conservatives have muffed it again, worrying about a soft euro and flight of savings to sterling, making the pound "too strong". This is like worrying about Britain becoming too prosperous.

A strong currency is overwhelmingly beneficial because it confers the power to command economic output. Suppose the pound traded at twice its current value against the US dollar. We could purchase any dollar-denominated commodity or property for half price. We could repay any dollar-denominated loan at half price. A strong pound will bring soft-Europeans begging for loans denominated (and repayable) in sterling. Being banker to the world is desirable.

The goal of UK monetary policy should be to attract capital to this country, not to devalue the pound so a tiny minority of exporters can flog cheap goods that can't compete against low-wage, soft-currency Asians or Europeans. Just as global inflation threatened world prosperity in the 1970s, the greatest danger today is a spiral of devaluation, with every currency competing to be the "softest" and least dependable store of value.

If William Hague wants to worry about something sensible, he should worry about new Labour taking Britain back into a continental monetary system dominated by socialist France. Surely Mr Hague remembers the idiotic ERM débacle that brought down John Major and made it possible for new Labour to seem reasonable by comparison. ALAN von ALTENDORF
Dunoon, Strathclyde

Sir: We have recently seen a plethora of statements by directors of companies bemoaning the high value of the pound and claiming that

it reduces their ability to "sell" overseas.

While it may make it more difficult to close orders, the selling has never been easier. The high value of the pound means that overseas selling costs are greatly reduced. With return air fares to the Far East for under £400 and, for the first time in years, discounted hotel rooms in most Far Eastern cities, the opportunity to be there and sell has seldom been more cost-effective.

Similar, if less dramatic, reductions apply to other markets, and any company that has not flooded its overseas markets with sales people over the last six months is missing a great opportunity and has no reason to complain.

DAVID HAWKSWORTH
Bournemouth, Dorset

US threat to peace

Sir: Robert Fisk's report (6 May) on the outcome of Tony Blair's last-ditch attempt to broker an agreement between Netanyahu and the man who was prepared to make peace with Rabin until this brave man was assassinated, made two things clearer than ever before.

First, when the world's greatest nation (in terms of military power) fields a Secretary of State whose contribution to this meeting will be remembered with the words, "It's up to the parties [to decide] whether we are serving the vegetables well," that nation is no longer fit to do more than just that.

The Palestinians have Europe to thank for the creation of this shambling do-gooder before whom we have bowed and scraped as lesser powers, grateful for US intervention in the last war, while every good that came of this evil has been upset by high-handed intervention, from Vietnam to Groada, from Chile to Libya and Iraq-Iran. That the Israelis

have Europe to thank for the Holocaust no longer excuses Europe's fawning conduct towards a country whose foreign policy is a danger to world peace.

Secondly, Netanyahu clearly believes that his mandate to serve the Israeli electorate is incommensurable with that given to Rabin, whose agreement to make peace with the Palestinians he therefore abrogates in the name of all Israeli citizens. So long as this intransigent US salesman stays in power, he and all Israelis come close to complicity in the murderous act of Yigal Amir, without which Jerusalem might now have been on the way to exemplifying the dreams which Jews, Muslims and Christians throughout centuries have pinned on it.

DAVID KUHRT
London N8

Safer trains

Sir: you report (30 April) the findings of the Health and Safety Executive inquiry in to the railway accident at Watford. It would not have happened if a system of automatic train protection (ATP) had been in use. The same day saw a near-miss of two commuter trains outside London Cannon Street - which also would not have occurred if ATP had been in use.

Time and again we are told by those in charge of our railways that the ATP system that they have in mind is far too costly, requiring expensive computer equipment in every driving cab and at every signal. But the London Underground has a system of ATP which does not use computers - it uses the simplest of Edwardian technology - and it has worked very successfully for about ninety years. Why can't they use that? Dr ARTHUR TARRANT
Twickenham, Middlesex

'Understanding' Bell

Sir: Quoting a couplet from Ben Jonson, Gitta Sereny writes in *Cries Unheard* (reviewed by Boyd Tonkin, 5 May), "Pray thee take care, that tak'st my book in hand/ To read it well: that is to understand."

Clearly, any understanding derived from the story of Mary Bell, recounted in the public arena in all its appalling detail, should help us to make some sense of the crimes involved. However, we do not all reach the same conclusions in terms of the understanding we have gained. In spite of Sereny's warning, the varied responses to the publication of her book graphically demonstrate this.

There is the assumption that understanding a particular form of behaviour is the same as explaining it and ultimately preventing it. However, explanations of such aberrant behaviour are a different category of insight and can only be based on knowledge about causation. No amount of understanding can be a substitute for this. Rather than providing explanations, the preoccupation with understanding such crimes often is little more than voyeurism.

Dr EMORAN
Consultant Psychiatrist
London N14

Legal fat cat?

Sir: Is the Lord Chancellor, in pursuance of his commendable objective for freedom of information, prepared to disclose the fees he received in his last year of practice at the Bar? OLIVER MISHCON
Temple,
London EC4

Sex or football

Sir: The solution to the tricky choice between sex with a dream woman and watching the World Cup on television (leading article, 5 May; letter, 6 May) is simple: set the video to record the football match, before enjoying the night of passion. SIMON WEBSTER
Brentford, Middlesex



MILES KINGSTON

Love, war and lost pyjamas - at last, the romantic novel everyone has been waiting for

EVERYONE knows that meo like reading action-packed war stories. Everyone knows that women prefer emotion-packed love stories. But not everyone knows that a publisher exists who caters for both tastes simultaneously and has pioneered the invention of war love stories.

Yes, Mills & Bang was created solely to bring you military romance, in other words bluish war sagas which combine killing and kissing, hand-holding and hand-to-hand combat in the same pulse-racing works of fiction!

Here are some new titles which Mills and Bang are proud to present for your summer reading...

CLOUD CUCKOO COURT-MARTIAL
by Daphne Summers

"MAJOR Rodney Strang is a modern hero", said Lieutenant Jenny Whittle at her court-martial. "He is a peerless soldier! He is a man it is hard not to love! I can say this, because I love him, as a soldier! Not

sexually, not physically - I love him so strictly military grounds! How can anyone say this is wrong?"

There is not a dry eye in the court as the beautiful raven-haired girl in uniform unfolds her tale of passion and explains why she was found in the bed of her commanding officer, even though he was not there at the time. Can she win them round to acquittal? Or will Mrs Rodney Strang get them to see things rather differently? A tale of tangled passions, desperate devotion to duty and a vital missing pair of pyjamas.

HEARTS ARE BID
by Rosie Coyne

"MIGHT I have a word, sir?" "Carry on, sergeant," said Major Knowles. "It's about that native woman you're interrogating," said the sergeant. "Excellent source of local information," said Knowles. "I'm glad we got hold of her. Invaluable. Why?" "Well," said the sergeant, "there's be-

ginning to be talk among the ranks. You've been interrogating her for over three months now. That's a long time."

"Good heavens! What are you trying to suggest?"

Knowles knew perfectly well what the sergeant was suggesting. But was he man enough to admit it? A story that follows the twists and turns of the human heart, and also examines some of the problems of foraging in semi-tropical scrubland.

SAX AND VIOLENCE
by Amanda Featherly

A SEQUEL to the popular *Sex and Violence*, this pursues the further career of bandmaster Robert "Big Baton" Baistow, as he seeks to lick the regimental band into shape. The band is now mixed, and Robert makes two interesting discoveries: one, that women musicians tend to march at a different speed to men players, and two, that trombonist Nellie Cornforth marches in a much more alluring way than cithar.

SOMME DAY, SWEETHEART
by Nesta Winterton

WHY has Liza come to the old Great War battlefields of northern France? Not because of family connections, but because she is drawn there by the magic of Sebastian Faulks's powerful novel, *Birdsong*, and even more by Sebastian Faulks's glamorous Greek profile. Standing on the edge of a French field, once battered by Boche bombardment, she hears a voice behind her: "You're Eoglish, aren't you?" Her heart jumps. No, it's not Faulks, but a TV researcher called Keo who has come to explore the possibility of turning *Birdsong* into television drama. Stick with Keo, her heart tells her, and one day it will lead to the long-awaited meeting with Faulks.

FIRM FRIENDS
by Gail Hardwick

"IT'S A GREAT mistake ever having let women in the Navy," said Captain Green-

haugh to Petty Officer Tim "Kim" Whitlow. "Fluttering of eyelashes, turn of a pretty ankle - things like that get out of all proportion to the average man when he's out at sea."

"It isn't eyelashes and ankles that the average man is after," said Petty Officer Tim "Kim" Whitlow. "Not that I have ever considered you an average man, sir..."

To his amazement, Whitlow put his hand gently on the captain's wrist. To his even greater amazement, the captain quite liked it.

"Tim..."

"Call me Kim, sir..." In the ensuing months, Captain Greenhaugh was to find out a great deal about himself he didn't know, a great deal about oavigation he should have known already, and exactly why Whitlow was known to the crew as Petty Officer Whitlow.

A new civic duty – giving a sample of DNA to the fuzz



DAVID
AARONOVITCH
ON THE CLAIMS
OF CITIZENSHIP

ONE NIGHT in August 1992 a fifteen year old girl, Helen Gorrie, was attacked and killed in the grounds of a community centre in the Hampshire village of Horndean. I remember the re-enactment from an edition of *Crème* when, after several months, her killer had still not been found. And I also recall thinking then, that to lose a daughter or a sister in this way must be dreadful enough, but for no one to be brought to account for it must be unbearable. Then, over the last two days, two men in their late twenties have been arrested in connection with the six year old crime, as a result – police have said – of “developments in DNA testing”. At the time of writing they have not been charged.

Yesterday's meeting between Home Office ministers and Peter Gammon, president of the Police Superintendents' Association, to discuss the latter's call for the establishment of a national DNA database was completely coincidental. Almost any week brings a crop of DNA stories, as the wonder technology sorts out some old mystery, or brings some vicious criminal to book. And Superintendent Gammon (what a reassuring name for a top cop. Is there, by any chance, a sidekick called Sergeant Spinnidge?) was not demanding immediate compulsory testing for all citizens just yet, but merely asking that we now discuss voluntary testing. So that's all right.

Or maybe it's not. The trouble for civil libertarians is that the police are – quite understandably – always after some new thing that would enhance their own powers and, by implication, reduce ours. They've just gotta have new sprays, longer batons and greater freedom to kick down the doors of malefactors. Who wants national identity cards? Why, they do. Who wants to get their hands on our DNA? They do.

Thus the unwillingness of the civil rights organisation Liberty to digest even the smallest piece of Gammon. “This proposal,” they thundered (in the nicest possible way), “represents part of a drift towards policing by coercion and away from our long tradition of policing by consent. A proposal like this is unbalanced, misguided and wrong.”

And for why? Argument one is the classic “thin end of the wedge”. A voluntary scheme could not work. Liberty says, because not enough people would take part. Its existence and failure would therefore be likely to create pressure for a compulsory one. We would end up being prosecuted for failing to give the local bobby an on-the-spot DNA sample.

Secondly, because – compulsory or voluntary – the use of such a database somehow implicates thousands of innocent people in a crime, simply because of their physical proximity to its occurrence. Though there is nothing to connect us to any wrongdoing, our most vital statistics will be given the once-over by eager policepersons, just in case. This is held to invert the natural law of investigation, where you are given the once-over because there is some reason to suspect you.

Liberty might have added two more objections: the risk of “planted” evidence, and the limitations of DNA testing in settling complex issues of detection. An example of the latter occurred at the weekend, when a skull – discovered in 1972 under some Berlin ruins – was proved to be that of Hitler's charming deputy, Martin Bormann. This proof was supposed to put to rest persistent (if tedious) rumours of the horrible man's survival after the war.

But no. Conspiracists merely incorporated the new finding into their existing theory, which was that Bormann was spirited out of Germany alive in 1945, that his signature was used to get at Hitler's private Swiss bank account, and that the odious little man then spent ten years in Reigate (he deserved at least thirty), before being allowed to go to Paraguay, where he eventually died. So now they believe that his skull was later dug up, brought back and “planted” in Berlin by some intelligence jannies, so as to cover their nasty tracks. Case not closed.

Well, what do we think of these reasons? Myself, I don't buy the thin edge stuff. Whereas I can quite easily see why a national voluntary ID card would soon effectively become compulsory – as more and more companies and agencies required its use for their own purposes – the same can hardly be true of DNA tests. There just aren't that many situations where a DNA profile is particularly useful: you can even get into the Canary Wharf Tower without one. So, if and when Mr Gammon's successors argue for a statutory scheme, then that's the time to raise the standard and fight.

Which brings me to my second problem with the libertarian argument. It may be a failure of imagination on my part, but why should it bother me being automatically screened for crimes that have taken place in my neighbourhood? Were a terrible murder to be committed down the road, and the police were to ask for local men to be tested, I would, of course, volunteer at once. Wouldn't you? All a database would do is to circumvent a whole lot of pleading by the local fuzz, and save a lot of time. And, sure, there is the danger of forensic fraud, but the scope for that is surely no greater than it is now, under the current arrangements. Oh, and there'll always be conspiracists.

To me it's a bit like other aspects of citizenship. There are, of course, those who want not to vote, not to attend school concerts, not to buy the Big Issue, not to claim social security – who value their not-access above everything. That is their right, and I don't have an argument with them. But, for most of us, it isn't like that. We willingly carry donor cards, give blood and run tombola stalls. And if we could, in any way, spare families like that of Helen Gorrie as much as one more day's suffering, then we would. And think that the minuscule risk to our own freedoms was well worth taking.

Everyone's nightmare: when Tony Blair and friends drop by for a photo-op

JOHN
WALSH



Ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes at a Prime Ministerial photo-opportunity? Andrew and Alison Brownlee used to wonder; now they know for sure. They run Callool Callay, a cafe-and-crèche facility designed to raise the spirits of shaggy-out parents in Altrincham, Cheshire – and, apparently, the morale of drooping heads of state in Downing Street. For it was to their cafe that Tony and Cherie Blair made their way last week. It was a one-hour visit that hit the Brownlees like an Oklahoma twister.

“One of the local councillors visited the cafe and presumably liked it because she came back with lots of New Labour men in black suits to check us out,” said Andrew. Operation Jabberwocky was on. The suits warned the Brownlees not to tell anyone about the presidential visit, on pain of losing the gig to some other Cheshire eatery. They also decided to close the cafe to the public, “... and two hours before the Blairs were due, the place was full of spin doctors with mobile phones, telling me where to move the furniture.” Mr Brownlee, a vision of proprietorial efficiency in his new lime-green shirt, was instructed to hump tables, chairs and even the painted tree on which the management hang children's toys. Put that there. Move that over here. “They seemed to be battling with each other to establish who was in charge,” said the put-upon Andrew. “It was like the scene in *Alice in Wonderland*, where the soldiers paint the palace roses red before the Queen arrives.”

Shortly before the Blairs got there, someone mislaid the key to the staff locker. The security police whinnied like thoroughbreds. It was like the



Tea for one: how many spin doctors does it take to cater for a PM?

Louvre just after they discovered the Corot was missing. “Did they think we'd been stockpiling kalashnikovs in there?” wondered Alison. She and her husband had spent the morning cleaning the cafe from top to bottom, and had finally thrown the last bits of junk into the cupboard under the stairs which doubles as the manager's office.

The children grew tired of waiting. “So where is he then,” demanded Imogen, three, “this Prime Minister?” Right on cue, the Blairs walked in, at the centre of a mobile phalanx of suits, a hydra-headed, twenty-legged triffid. Blair looked around the spotless room. Was there a place he could go to be briefed and miked up? How about that room over there? To Alison's horror, he disappeared into the junk-crammed cupboard, to be groomed and cupped amid the debris of toys and cutlery.

A hattered PM reappeared. “Hi,” he said. “Any chance of a cup of tea?” It was the cue for an explosion of activity. A dozen New Labour men scrambled for the bar. When even wait behind the bar to help hold the water. Mr Blair's modest request was repeated several times at increasing volume, like clerks of the court summoning witnesses. At least one man urgently confided the words, “PM has ordered one

tea” into his Nokia 500. The bemused barman surveyed the supplicating hands. “Right then,” he said, “I make that eleven teas so far...” No, they corrected him. Just the one.

The Blairs were there because the cafe is a nice, bright family place in a nice, busy market street in Altrincham where the nice local Trafford council is a former Conservative stronghold that went staunchly Labour a while back, and thus represents, by synecdoche, the whole nation a year ago. A pity nobody seemed to notice that the town itself – the constituency of Altrincham and Sale West – has a Conservative MP, Graham Brady, and is one of few places that didn't swing to Labour at the last election. But the event passed off

happily, the cafe was on a dozen front pages next day, and life returned to normal. Rather quickly, as a matter of fact. As the PM departed with press pack, photographers, spin doctors and autograph hunters in tow, and the proprietors surveyed the silent, suddenly-deserted cafe, a customer walked in.

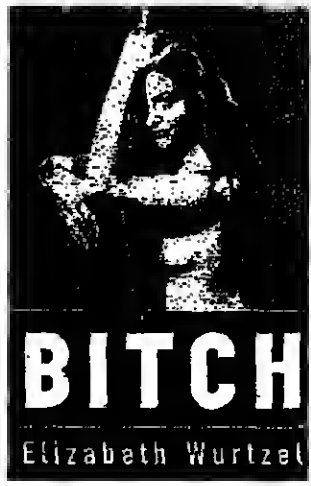
“Is there anything going on here?” he asked. Andrew looked at his expectant face – the face of an ordinary man, wondering if he too could be touched, just briefly, by the Hand of History – and said, “Sorry. The Prime Minister's just left.” “No,” said the customer, “I mean, are you serving lunch yet?”

It's the final game of the football season on Saturday and I'm concerned about the Curse of the Credit Sequence on BBC's *Match of the Day*. Every Saturday night, the programme starts with a succession of images featuring the finest feet in the kingdom doing their stuff. But almost all the footballers pictured have been rabbit-punched by Fate at some point in the season: Roy Keane of Manchester United was injured last September and hasn't played since; Robbie Fowler, the Liverpool striker, hurt his leg in March and won't be in the English World Cup team, any more than will

Les Ferdinand of Spurs; Chelsea's Franco Zola is injured and will probably not make the Italian world squad; and Alan Shearer, while only an Act of God could keep him out of the England team, may yet be charged with bringing the game into disrepute by kicking Neil Lennon of Leicester City in the face a couple of weeks ago. Not quite a band of heroes, is it? The only one unscathed by the *MOTD* curse is David Seaman, the saintly Arsenal and England goalkeeper – though his flirtation with Hugo Boss suits and dark glasses last week made him look more like a retired Sicilian enforcer than the saviour of his nation.

It is with great reluctance that I reproduce this picture of a naked woman in these hallowed pages. But, as the lady herself explains, there's nothing trashy or vulgar about it. It is Elizabeth Wurtzel, author of *Prozac Nation*, freelance polemicist and all-round Bit of a Handful, who appears undraped on the cover (below left) of her new book *BITCH* in order to show (she says) “that women should have it both ways – they should be able to flaunt their sexuality and be taken seriously”. Ms Wurtzel clearly longs to be taken as a more slinky version of Camille Paglia. Her book is subtitled “In Praise of Difficult Women” and complains about the treatment visited by patriarchal customs etc upon badly-behaved dames from Delilah to Diana.

In two weeks' time, you'll see Ms Wurtzel spreadeagled across every organ in the UK, dilating upon power, sex, intelligence and male hatred with all the fluency you expect from a Manhattan opportunist with a \$500,000 advance. A shame then that the most urgent question being asked by her fellow New York intellectuals is: does she actually possess nipples? The fact that they seem to have been airbrushed out of the cover picture (voices complain) doesn't say much for her brave stand for sexual honesty. But the question is calculatedly reductive. Some literary types are treating Ms Wurtzel's impassioned 424-page diatribe with disrespect. James Woolcot, the acidulous *Vanity Fair* critic, when asked his opinion, said: “She should just have called it *What I Think About Stuff*... Not much chance of a follow-up. *Bastard*. In Praise of Horrible Men, I'm afraid.



Bill Clinton could look to the UK for a human rights lesson

Rupert Cornwell
celebrates the first
birthday of Robin
Cook's ethical
foreign policy

NEXT WEEK marks an anniversary. Labour's “ethical foreign policy” will be exactly a year old, and worth a small celebration. For this particular concept of advancing human rights has not, as widely predicted, collapsed in a heap of hypocrisy or fatuity. Indeed, it's not looking bad at all – certainly in comparison with the performance on the other side of the Atlantic.

Take China, admittedly always a tricky case. A policy of substituting public hectoring with private pressure is one thing. But quite another is President Clinton's agreement that the welcome ceremony for his visit to China next month should be held in Tiananmen Square. Will he use his words at the place whose name is shorthand for China's view of human rights, to remind his hosts of their failings? Will there be even a small note of disapproval over China's behaviour in Tibet, the acid test of its human rights performance? Don't hold your breath – at least if the *Washington Post*'s account of a White House visit by Wei Jingsheng, the Chinese dissident, is anything to go by.

The President was holding forth about the importance of human rights, when his thoughts were rudely interrupted by the arrival of Sandy Berger, his national security adviser, who reminded him of billions of dollars of outstanding US contracts with Beijing. At which point Mr Clinton delivered a dollop of trademark fudge to Mr Wei: “We are concerned about trade, but we are much more concerned about human rights.” It sounds fine, but the subtext is clear. The business of America remains business.

Or take another bellwether human rights issue, the proposed permanent International Criminal Court, under the auspices of the UN. The expected creation of a such a court

later this year could be a milestone in the struggle for human rights – but the key word is “could”. For everything depends on the power vested in the body, and the US is insisting on the right to veto individual cases, on the grounds that American peacekeepers might otherwise be subject to frivolous prosecution. But a US veto would mean a veto for all Security Council members – certainly for its five permanent members. And could anyone imagine, say, China permitting a trial of its one-time protégé Pol Pot? If the US has its way, some crimes against humanity will simply slip through the net.

Much scepticism has been voiced over the “ethical foreign policy”, and many holes picked in it, notably the allegedly

over-gentle treatment of the likes of Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. But the language is right, and the project, more or less, is holding. A year on, human rights organisations still give Robin Cook the benefit of the doubt. “Yes, we'd like to see more contracts actually cancelled, and development aid programmes more closely tied to human rights,” is the reaction, “but don't write the whole thing off. Behind the scenes there's some very interesting stuff going on.” Not least interesting is Britain's belief – at direct odds with the US – that the international criminal court, not governments, should decide which cases to bring, to ensure its independence.

Britain too appears to see

more clearly the chance offered by the Asian financial crisis, which has borne hardest on some of the countries most resistant to reason on human rights. In Indonesia this week, Gordon Brown sounded exactly the right note, arguing that “every economic reform programme must have a social element ... in the context of respect for individual (read ‘human’) rights.” In other words, that the International Monetary Fund, whose support is vital for the economic recovery of these countries, could be a crucial force not merely for financial reform and open markets, but explicitly for human rights as well. If that argument could be impressed upon Washington and others, that would be a coup indeed.

House valet

THE TORIES were pleading poverty in front of the Niall Committee yesterday during its hearings on party funding. First Gillian Shephard, shadow leader of the House, appeared; she was followed by Lord Cranborne, Leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords, elegantly dressed in a blue suit, silk tie and natty yellow bow tie. Some smug onlookers chuckled at what they perceived as the irony of the resplendent Viscount testifying to the party's penny. Then he crossed his legs. Clearly visible in the material of the heel of each sock was a large threadbare chasm. Pandora wonders if the noble Lord, always well dressed for every occasion, could have asked his tailor to run up a “distressed” pair just for this committee appearance?

Missing ring

The evidence is mounting: Robin Cook is not a New Man. Since his Tunbridge Wells registry office wedding to Gaynor, the Foreign Secretary has conspicuously not been seen wearing a wedding band.

Tongue-twister

How do you pronounce “Wim Duisenberg” – the name of the Dutchman who, after a diplomatic brawl the weekend, was appointed head of the European Central Bank? Yesterday Tony Blair tried two different approaches. First, it was “Doo-zen-berg”, then it became “Doy-zenberg”. MP William Cash has been calling the distinguished banker “Dwee-zen-berg”. Now Pandora has contacted a

PANDORA

friend in the land of Gouda and wooden shoes for the absolutely definitive rendition. Sorry, Tony and Bill, but you weren't even close. It's “Dow-zen-bairk”.

Joke abuse

Wanted: a new joke writer for David Blunkett. The Secretary of State for Education has a lively sense of humour, often joking at his own expense. Yesterday, for example, speaking to a group of pre-school educators at London's Mermaid Theatre, he told a story about visiting a nursery

school and having to sit down on a tiny chair. Turning on his warmest paternal charm, he put his arm around one child and asked her age. “Twenty-four,” was the answer. That was funny, Dave, the first six times they heard it. But the pre-school circuit is a tough one so you'd better find a new joke.

First comic

Why do some American presidents and their wives shine so much more brightly once they've left the White House? Remember the awkward preppy President George Bush and his dowdy First Lady Barbara? On Monday, Mrs Bush revealed a new stand-up comic side to her personality. “How come nobody thought I ever had an affair with anyone?” she

asked an audience in New York. “When George was President, a lot of people thought I looked like his mother – or George Washington.”



Pandora wonders if Hillary Clinton will start cracking self-deprecating jokes once she leaves Washington. Surely she's got all the material she needs.

LOOK OUT!
CLOSE ON-COUNTERS
of the ale kind. Mysterious,
smooth talking stranger seen
in the bar. Was it a U.F.A?
Contact Moulder Box 1824.



FOUNDERS
FLAVOUR WORTH FINDING

Sainsbury swaps food for politics

By Nigel Cope
Associate City Editor

THE CITY reacted with astonishment yesterday to the news that Lord Sainsbury of Turville is to retire from the Sainsbury's supermarket business in September to pursue a career as a working peer. The decision will see the Sainsbury's family relinquish leadership of the business after almost 130 years. Dino Adriano, head of the Diageo drinks group, has been appointed non-executive chairman.

Lord Sainsbury said he felt the ground had been well prepared for his departure after six years at the helm. He said he had been required to make the decision last October as to whether or not he wanted to be a working peer and added that the Sainsbury's family, which controls 40 per cent of the shares, would remain "committed shareholders".

However, City analysts said they were surprised by the timing. One said: "I certainly had no idea this was on the horizon. You could look at the decision to promote Dino Adriano to chief executive while back as trailing this but I had expected the move to be some years away."

Sainsbury's shares closed 22.5p higher at 502.5p as the market reacted positively to the news that the family is to take a back seat. Andrew

Marsh, food retail analyst at Charterhouse Tilney said: "The market has viewed the news as positive. For a long time there has been a perception that the family involvement has held back the company strategy. Now we could see a shift."

Another said the changes could include less emphasis on America, where results have been poor. "It would be an opportunity to review the business and, if things do not improve there, I would not be surprised if they decide to sell it," the analyst said.

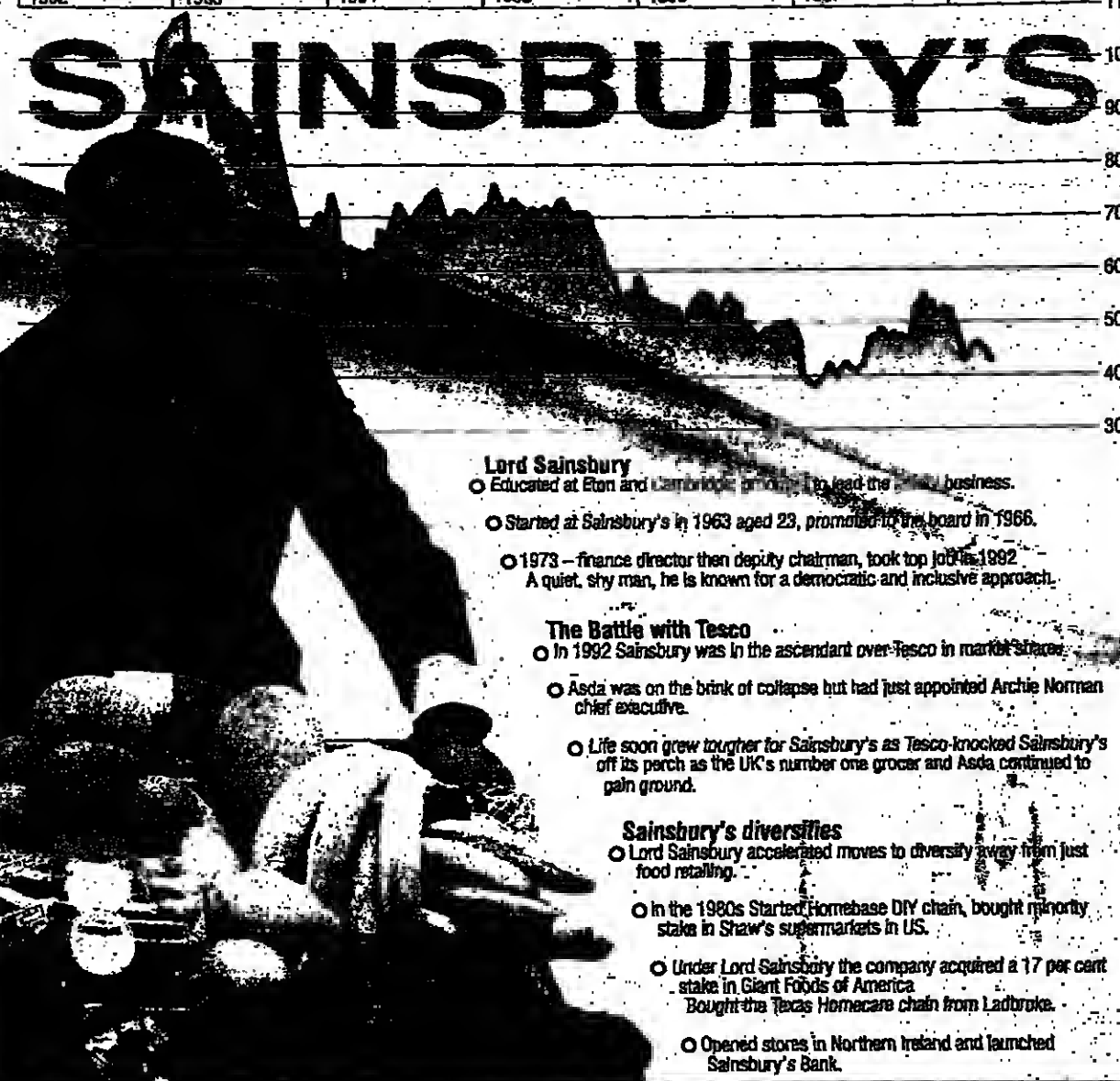
However, Clive Vaughan at Verdick, the retail consultants, played down the significance of the change at the top. "I don't think it matters that much. Sainsbury's is an enormous business and a public company. Having one or more Sainsburys on the board is just a relic of history. What is left is a very capable management team."

Lord Sainsbury has been under pressure for several years as the company lost ground to Tesco, was forced into a U-turn on loyalty cards and issued its first profits warning in 25 years as a public company.

Lord Sainsbury expressed some sadness about the severing of the family tie but said he was looking forward to his new role as chairman of the University for Industry, a new Government initiative to help people who leave school without the prospect of further education. "There is a sense of excitement at the prospect of something new," he pointed

Checking out the Sainsbury years

Sainsbury shares against FTSE100, rebased to 1/11/92



out the growth in the business, saying when he joined in 1963 it had profits of £2m on sales of £79m. At that time, the head office in Stamford Street on London's South Bank was also the distribution centre and a cheese shop. Now Sainsbury's has profits of £728m on sales of £15.5bn. "To have played a part in that growth has been tremendous," he said.

Although he has often looked uncomfortable in the corporate spotlight he denied he had felt driven to join the family business by a sense of duty. "You have to be a bit wet not to take up the challenge. To have that kind of opportunity and to turn it down would seem rather odd."

He continued: "I would not have done this if a good management team had not been in place. What is important is that the value and standards of Sainsbury's will continue."

He was speaking as Sainsbury's reported a 12 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £728m. Like-for-like sales rose by 3.4 per cent in the year and are up by 2.8 per cent in current trading.

Sainsbury's said its market share increased from 12.7 per cent to 12.9 per cent in the year. However, it still lags Tesco by some distance and its sales growth is far slower.

The company announced plans to create 5,000 new jobs this year with 18 new store openings. These will include

three new smaller-format stores under the name Sainsbury's Local. The first of these branches, which follow the success of Tesco Metro, will open on the Fulham Palace Road in London later this year.

Homebase, the DIY chain, saw operating profits triple through the kitchen business lost £5m in the year. In the United States, profits were hit by the impact of a strike and losses in Connecticut.

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Shares soar on prospect of \$80bn deal

Daimler and Chrysler in merger talks

By Michael Harrison in London
David Osborne in New York
and Imre Karacs in Bonn

DAIMLER-BENZ and Chrysler set the automotive industry alight yesterday after confirming they were in merger talks to create the world's fifth largest car producer with sales of \$130bn (£78bn) and a market capitalisation of \$80bn.

A combination of Daimler, Germany's second biggest car group, and Chrysler, number three in the US, would bring together marques such as the Mercedes S-Class, the Jeep and Dodge Viper sports car and would pose a serious competitive threat to BMW and Volkswagen.

The merged company would sell 3.9 million cars and light trucks a year and have automotive turnover of \$114bn, putting it within reach of the third and fourth biggest players, Toyota and Volkswagen.

The boards of the respective companies were meeting in Stuttgart and Detroit last night to discuss the merger after their shares soared earlier in the day on news of the potential deal.

Both companies cautioned that no definitive agreement had yet been signed, nor was there any assurance that such a deal would be reached.

If the talks succeed, Daimler, which is twice the size of Chrysler and also owns aerospace, rail and electronics interests, would acquire the US car maker through an exchange of shares. The deal would value Chrysler at \$35bn, compared with a market capitalisation of \$27bn before the announcement.

Although essentially a German takeover, there were reports yesterday that Jürgen Schrempp, the Daimler chairman, and Robert Eaton, the Chrysler chairman, would become joint chief executives.

Industry experts gave the proposed deal an overwhelming thumbs-up, pointing out the two companies had very little product or geographic overlap. Garel Rhye, director of the Centre for Automotive Industry Research at Cardiff University Business School, said: "This would be an alliance where the pluses easily outweigh the minuses. Mercedes has lagged behind its German rivals and this deal would allow it to leap Bob Beaman-style ahead of them."

Analysts said a combination of Mercedes' top-of-the-range saloons with Chrysler's strength in 4x4, utility and pickup vehicles could give it an edge over the likes of BMW and enable the two companies to lever off each other's geographic strengths. Mercedes would get improved access to the US market, the biggest in the world.

Chrysler, which has little presence in Europe after it pulled out of the market 20 years ago, would be able to use Mercedes' distribution channels to expand sales of its Jeep Grand Cherokee and Voyager range.

News of the negotiations boosted shares in Chrysler in early New York trading yesterday. The other two main car manufacturers in the US, Ford and General Motors, also saw their stocks rise. At mid-morning, Chrysler was up \$5.75 to \$47.25.

Daimler-Benz shares also soared on the Frankfurt exchange by over 9 per cent, before they settled at DM192.90, up 7.4 per cent.

US analysts welcomed the prospect of a merger, in particular as a means of boosting Chrysler's international presence as well as its position in the US, where its market share dipped last year to 16 per cent, behind General Motors and Ford. Its strength lies in utility and off-road vehicles with cars accounting for just a third of production.

"To some extent it is a hand-in-glove fit," said analyst Scott Merdis of Merdis Automotive International. "I would say it looks like a match made in heaven."

There was a mixed reaction from shocked Chrysler workers yesterday. Many expressed anxiety about the company essentially falling into foreign hands and the prospect of possible job cuts.

Daimler, with 300,000 employees and a turnover of DM124bn (£42bn), is Germany's largest industrial conglomerate with 70 per cent of its sales from cars, trucks and buses. It is also a member of the Eurofighter and Airbus jet consortia and makes trains through the Adtranz joint venture with ABB.

Last year, the group recorded a profit of DM4.3bn. Despite a series of reorganisations in which Mercedes-Benz lost its autonomy, the car-making division remains the group's flagship and accounts for the lion's share of group profits.

Although Mercedes trades on its upper-crust appeal, it has lately been expanding into the sub-compact market with the A-Class and its upcoming mini Smart car.

The merger would complete a remarkable turn-around for a group that recorded an operating loss of nearly DM6bn in 1995. Jürgen Schrempp, chairman of Daimler-Benz, made severe cuts in the company's operation in 1996, ditching its investment in the aircraft manufacturer Fokker, among others.

A restructuring programme has paid to thousands of jobs. Some of the group's divisions, notably the aeronautics arm Dasa, remain in the red.

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Barclays' new brand takes on Virgin and the supermarkets

By Lea Paterson
and Nic Cicutti

BARCLAYS yesterday attempted to throw off its traditional banking image and tackle Richard Branson's Virgin and the supermarket banks head-on with the launch of a new financial services company, called "b2".

The new venture is aimed at the 5.5 million UK savers who have traditionally shied away from the stock market.

b2's first product the "Advantaged Savings Account" - is linked to the stock market, but guarantees customers will not lose their savings in the event of a market crash.

But calculations show that the cost of the guarantee is so great that stock market growth of 45 per cent over three years would only deliver annual returns of about 8.2 per cent, barely better than some building society investment bonds.

Mark Bogard, managing director of b2, said: "Many people feel that they could make more of their money than in the building society. But they simply don't feel confident or comfortable enough to do anything about it. b2 will bridge the gap between savings and investing for ordinary savers."

Barclays said the brand b2 was an attempt to combine the concepts of safety and security traditionally associated with the Barclays brand with the "newness and innovation" conjured up by recent entrants. In recent months, the high street banks have had to cope with an aggressive assault on their core saving markets from new entrants such as Virgin and the supermarkets.

The company said that any similarity between b2 and V2, the new Virgin record label was "entirely coincidental". The bank added that neither itself nor Budgens, the supermarket, were concerned by similarities between the brand names of their services.

Last month, Budgens rebranded its 7-11 stores "b2". Martio Taylor, Barclays' chief executive, said his company was "trying to change the way people save". He added "this will be a very important market for us".

City experts were more cynical about Barclays' latest move, saying it was "good PR" but not necessarily good for profitability.

b2's advanced saving account requires a minimum investment of £500, or £50 per month. Savers can take "payment holidays" and may withdraw their money at any time. The account is "PEP-able" and will evolve to fit the criteria of the government's new Individual Savings Account (ISA).

Mr Taylor said the new company "drew on the skills and strength from around the Barclays Group". Barclays Global Investors will manage b2's funds, and Barclays Capital will look after the equity derivatives operation.

b2 is aimed at an audience of self-perceived thrusters, modern, "can-do" customers who are bored by old-fashioned, fuddy-duddy investment talk.

Yet shorn of its 30-some-

The venture is aimed at savers who have shied away from the stock market

thing radical chic, the clever imagery, the daring typography and trendy logo, the new Advantaged Savings Account (ASA) is an old idea with a few fresh bells and whistles.

It is a guaranteed stock market investment product, investing in the FTSE 100 share index. The company is targeting former building society savers who want the same ease of access coupled with a level of security, but with minimum risks. The amount savers get back at the end of either a three, five or seven-year investment period in the ASA is guaranteed, even if share prices fall. If the stock market rises, savers gain most of that upside, including dividend income. Derivatives are used to underpin this guarantee.

Investors seduced by the seemingly limitless opportunities of equity market growth should also remember that any potential upside is limited to about 86 per cent of their investment. The rest of their money is used to pay for the guarantees that protect them against any downside. Over shorter periods, stock markets have delivered worse returns than building societies.

In this, as in many other respects, the ASA is similar to most other guaranteed investment products. But there are a number of differences, including easier access to funds and the possibility of payment holidays without penalty.

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Merger by Scholl gives chairman a fourth fortune

By Andrew Yates

SCHOLL, the company famous for producing anything from wooden sandals to corn plasters designed to soothe weary feet, yesterday announced a £691m merger with Seton Healthcare, Britain's largest supplier of cootie-encounter treatments.

It also emerged that Stuart Wallis, Scholl non-executive chairman, is to make his fourth fortune in three years. He stands to receive £1m from Scholl after the merger is completed as part of an incentive plan. The deal caps a busy few months for Mr Wallis. He was instrumental in floating LLP, publisher of Lloyd's List, and has shares worth more than £2m in the group. He also made a substantial sum this year for his role of selling Sheffield Forgemasters, the engineering group, which was embroiled in the Iraqi supergun scandal. His recent gains come on top of the £2.5m he is said to have made when Fisons, the drugs group, was bought by Rhone-Poulenc in 1995.

Mr Wallis will retain his £100,000-a-year position at the merged healthcare group. Scholl's other directors also

stand to make hundreds of thousands of pounds from share options to be crystallised on completion of the deal.

The merger will lead to up to 280 job losses and the closure of Scholl's head office in Luton, saving millions of pounds for the combined group.

Seton produces products such as Deep Heat, Woodward's gripe water, Mellics cough mixtures, head lice treatments and bandages. The fast-expanding group has recently bought Resolve, the hangover cure, and ThackrayCare, UK market leader in urinary bags.

Seton, with most of its business in the UK, plans to use Scholl's international network to expand overseas. The combined group, to be called Seton Scholl Healthcare is likely to look for further acquisitions and could have another £150m at its disposal. It will be the third largest supplier of over the counter products to pharmacies in the UK. Shares in Seton rose 68.5p to 448.5p and those in Scholl jumped 45p to 708.5p. Seton shareholders will own 53.1 per cent of the group with Scholl shareholders receiving 63.88 new Seton shares for every 100 shares they hold.

Speeding ahead

Global unit sales, millions, 1997

Company	1997	1996
GM	8.78	
Ford		8.54
Toyota		4.26
VW		3.99
Chrysler/Daimler		2.86
Fiat		2.83
Nissan		2.11
Pugeot/Citroen		2.04
Honda		1.91
Mitsubishi		

Yesterday in the markets

STOCK MARKETS

Index	Close	Change	52 wk High	52 wk Low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5087.30	+0.80	5150.50	4382.80	3.35
FTSE 250	5704.70	+22.40	5882.40	4384.20	2.84
FTSE 350	2888.20	+0.50	2938.70	2141.90	3.29
FTSE All Share	2817.35	+0.17	2881.12	2108.59	3.24
FTSE SmallCap	2874.00	+0.70	2928.30	2182.10	2.69
FTSE Realind	1430.90	+0.00	1430.90	1225.20	3.17
FTSE AIM	1090.20	+0.00	1090.20	985.90	1.07
FTSE EURO 100	1003.72	+5.25			
Dow Jones	9117.68	+19.93	9261.81	8971.32	1.35
Nikkei	16243.84	+357.26	20910.79	14488.21	0.99
Hang Seng	10109.14	+44.32	16820.51	7929.13	3.95
Dax	6229.80	+2.29	6442.00	5487.24	1.52

INTEREST RATES

Short sterling	UK 10 year gilt	US long bond
3m	5.75	6.50
6m	5.75	6.50
1yr	5.75	6.50
2yr	5.75	6.50
3yr	5.75	6.50
4yr	5.75	6.50
5yr	5.75	6.50
10yr	5.75	6.50
15yr	5.75	6.50
20yr	5.75	6.50
25yr	5.75	6.50
30yr	5.75	6.50

CURRENCIES

£/\$	£/DM	£/¥
1.6621	1.6385	161.00
1.6621	1.6385	161.00
1.6621	1.6385	161.00
1.6621	1.6385	161.00
1.6621	1.6385	161.00
1.6621	1.6385	161.00
1.6621	1.6385	161.00
1.6621	1.6385	161.00
1.6621	1.6385	161.00
1.6621	1.6385	161.00

TOURIST RATES

Country	Rate
Australia (\$)	2.4997
Austria (schillings)	20.04
Belgium (francs)	58.86
Canada (\$)	2.3280
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8339
Denmark (kroner)	10.94
Finland (markka)	8.7324
France (francs)	9.5688
Germany (marks)	2.8620
Greece (drachmas)	493.16
Hong Kong (\$)	12.45
Ireland (pounds)	1.3121
India (rupees)	80.83
Israel (shekels)	5.6743
Italy (lira)	390.47
Japan (yen)	215.12
Malaysia (ringgits)	5.9692
Malta (lira)	0.8227
Mexico (nuevo peso)	12.81
Netherlands (guilders)	3.2115
New Zealand (\$)	2.8083
Norway (kroner)	11.92
Portugal (escudos)	200.48
Saudi Arabia (riyals)	6.0441
Singapore (\$)	2.5245
Spain (pesetas)	216.85
South Africa (rand)	8.0786
Sweden (kronor)	12.35
Switzerland (francs)	2.3398
Thailand (bahts)	57.83
Turkey (liras)	390.47
USA (\$)	1.8204

هذا من الاصل



OUTLOOK
ON THE DECISION TO
CUT FAMILY TIES, THE
SMALL PRINT
WITH BARCLAYS' NEW
PRODUCT, AND
THE LONG ROAD
AHEAD FOR CHRYSLER
AND DAIMLER-BENZ

Sainsbury is moving in the right direction

DAVID SAINSBURY is happy about it, George Bull, the new chairman, is happy about it, Dino Adriano, the chief executive, is happy about it, and perhaps most important of all, the City is happy about it. In the end it hardly seems to matter whether Lord Sainsbury was persuaded to go or, as he insists, is going of his own accord. Whatever the case, he never looked comfortable as head of the family dynasty. His style was a complete contrast to his famously autocratic uncle, John Sainsbury, and it was always hard to avoid the impression that he was there more out of a sense of duty than ambition.

That said, it ought to be added that David Sainsbury was never a no-hoper, third-generation, chinless wonder of a manager. His reign has not been a conspicuous success, but then he was unlucky to step into the hot seat just as the company was in any case coming seriously off the boil. In private moments, he would say that it was sometimes a burden having your name over the door. In his five and half years at the helm, Sainsbury's has under-performed the market by quite a bit and been overtaken convincingly by its arch-rival Tesco.

There were certainly mistakes. Lord Sainsbury dismissed loyalty cards as little more than "electronic Green Shield stamps"

and then had to launch his own when they proved a spectacular success at Tesco. The company avoided urban mini-stores like Tesco Metros, saying they would not be profitable. Several years later it is testing its own smaller stores called Sainsbury's Local.

All the same, Sainsbury's does now seem to have turned the corner and David Sainsbury can take the credit for that. Had he left last autumn when he first contemplated the move, the judgement of history would have been a harsh one. As it is, he seems to be leaving the ship in relatively good order. His decision to sever the family link with management is also undoubtedly the right one. Marks & Spencer and Tesco flourished after their family ties were cut. With its strong brand name there is no reason why Sainsbury's cannot make it a hat trick.

B squared equals nothing new

SHOULD we call it B two, B to the power of two, or B squared? B two it is, but apparently the name has to be written in the logo as b², since Budgens has already rechristened as b2 its Seven Eleven chain of convenience stores. The fact that this

should be more of a talking point than the product itself tells you all you need to know about it.

On the face of it, this looks like a relatively clever and attractive savings product for which there should be a quite considerable demand, but actually it's not that at all. Certainly it won't change the face of the British savings market, nor is it likely to make any impact on Barclays' profits. There is already a plethora of "guaranteed" products on the market. This one doesn't look so different from the rest of them. If anything, the likely returns are less generous. As for the marketing blurb that accompanied the launch, some of it is positively insulting for anyone who knows about these things.

Take this. The press release tells us that the 4 million people in Britain with more than £1,000 in a restricted-access savings account would have earned 10 times as much on their money last year by sticking it in the stock market than by leaving it where it was. Well strike a light! We'd all be rich by now if we'd known the stock market was going to rise by as much as it has.

It's easy to mock, isn't it, and despite the hype, Barclays may be tapping into a real demand here. This is similar to the demand that has swelled the American mutuals to

such extraordinary levels in recent years – the slow dawning realisation by Jn Six-pack that since his money won't earn much in the way of interest any longer he ought to stick it into the soaraway stock market, where returns of 20 per cent per annum are now a dead cert, aren't they?

There lies the rub. By our calculations, the market needs to rise quite dramatically to yield a return on this account which is significantly higher than a traditional long term savings account. The b² account plays on fear of the bear by guaranteeing your original capital, but you would still lose out badly in real terms if the market failed to make headway during the lifetime of the product. Moreover, the risk of that happening scarcely justifies the relatively high management and hedging costs of the account. In most cases, equity investors would do better to stick their money in a traditional tracker fund.

A good fit – if the deal goes through

ONCE upon a time the idea of Mercedes parking up with the company that gave us the lemon known as the Talbot Sunbeam

would have sent shivers down the spine in the Fatherland. But history has moved on since 1979 when Chrysler beat its ignominious retreat from Europe, leaving the British government to pick up the pieces at Linwood.

Twenty years on, Chrysler and Daimler-Benz make rather a good fit. The Americans nowadays make more light trucks than cars and their Jeep Grand Cherokees, Voyagers and Ram pick-ups would not look out of place on the firecourt alongside the Merc S-Class. There would be no messy bust-ups over whose models to ditch – the issue that killed off the Ford-Fiat merger. Nor, despite the understandable apprehension in Michigan, would there be any obvious casualties among the combined workforce.

For the same reasons, there would be limited opportunities for cost savings, making this more of a marketing merger than an industrial alliance. But, as both companies were keen to point out yesterday, no agreement has yet been signed and egos could still get in the way despite the bizarre idea of making Jürgen Schrempp and Robert Eaton co-chief execs. Both will be calculating the other won't be around for long but both will be equally conscious they could be the loser. This is not yet a done deal.

Tough new regime for markets

By Andrew Verity

THE FINANCIAL Services Authority will have the power to levy unlimited fines on insider dealers and anyone who engages in market abuse, the Government announced yesterday.

In a complete revamp of the way regulation works, the FSA will be able to take civil action against anyone who abuses financial markets – not just those who are members of an official regulator.

Anyone who engages in share ramps, false trades or attempts to corner the market will be open to civil action under a universal Code of Market Conduct.

Wives of directors or even golfing partners could be fined under the code, which will spell out what is meant by unacceptable market behaviour.

Until now, regulators have often been powerless to pursue suspected market abuse which stops short of insider trading. The new powers will allow the FSA to avoid the lengthy and often cumbersome process of going to the courts.

Alistair Darling, chief secretary to the Treasury, said: "It

is essential that the financial markets are protected from abuse. Damage to the markets damages the economy as a whole. For the first time, the regulator will have a set of coherent and comprehensive civil powers in this area."

The City's super-regulator will also have the power to prosecute insider dealers as criminals, a job usually reserved for the Department of Trade and Industry and the Crown Prosecution Service. Money-launderers will also come within its scope.

The new powers will form part of the Financial Regulation Reform Bill, to come into force in 1999. A draft version of the Bill will be published in the summer.

City firms were reassured there will be an independent tribunal to consider appeals against FSA decisions. The tribunal will be part of the courts system, independent of the FSA.

Howard Davies, chairman of the FSA, said the proposal to create a new civil regime was in response to concerns about the inadequacies of the current system. The FSA would shortly consult market participants on a draft code of market conduct.

DTI report prompts Fraud Office inquiry into Matbro

THE SERIOUS Fraud Office is to investigate the Matbro subsidiary of Belfast-based Powerscreen International, following a DTI report on accounting irregularities at the firm. Powerscreen, an engineering group, said on Tuesday it had retained London law firm Herbert Smith in connection with the Matbro irregularities. In January, following the discovery of the irregularities, the group said it would report a pre-tax loss of around £10m for the year ending 31 March compared with a £42.4m profit the previous year.

AMP windfall beats estimates

MORE THAN 170,000 British shareholders in AMP are set for a windfall £1,000 higher than expected, the Australian insurer confirmed yesterday. AMP yesterday released its prospectus for flotation on 15 June. Average payouts are expected to be close to £4,000, above estimates of £3,000 published in September.

'Single labour market unlikely'

PREDICTIONS that the euro will mean harmonisation of pay and conditions throughout the Continent are wide of the mark, according to a report published yesterday. Despite some "equalisation" of wages for people with certain skills, there will still be formidable barriers to a "single European labour market". Writing in *EMU – The Journal For Business*, pay analyst David Shepherd said cultural and linguistic limitations on mobility would remain.

Profits slide at BSkyB

A JUMP in the cost of broadcasting Premier League soccer matches and rising start-up losses of joint ventures and interest costs combined to push pre-tax profits at pay television giant BSkyB down nearly 6 per cent in the first nine months of the year. The company, which is 40 per cent owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp, said pre-tax profits had fallen £12m to £203.3m in the nine months to 31 March on an 18 per cent rise in turnover.

US invests £7.6bn in Europe

AMERICAN companies bought a record number of groups based in the European Union in the first quarter of 1998 – 198, worth a combined £7.6bn. The figures, from *Acquisitions Monthly* magazine, included the pending £4.3bn takeover of Energy Group by Texas Utilities.

Passenger load dips at BA

BRITISH AIRWAYS' passenger load factor fell 2.8 per cent in April from a year earlier to 68.8 per cent as mainline scheduled passenger traffic rose 5.7 per cent but capacity rose 10 per cent.

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ScottishPower amasses £3bn war chest for US deal

By Michael Harrison

SCOTTISHPOWER, the energy, water and telecoms multi-utility, yesterday set its sights on a big US acquisition, indicating that it had up to £3bn to spend on the right deal.

The company, which pulled out of talks to acquire a Florida electricity producer two weeks ago, said it still had a shortlist of half

a dozen US utilities that could provide it with a bridgehead into the deregulated American energy market.

Ian Robinson, ScottishPower's chief executive, maintained that its plans for a US acquisition were not a defensive move designed to ward off a takeover bid from one of the US utilities circling the British electricity industry.

He also insisted that ScottishPower was not under any pressure to make a big

acquisition and said it would only do a deal if it created a significant return for shareholders.

ScottishPower was prepared to pay around \$5bn (£2.98bn) for Florida Progress, a vertically integrated electricity producer in north-east Florida with 1.3 million customers. It would have raised £1bn by selling off parts of Florida and funded the remaining £2bn with £1.5bn of debt and a £500m share issue to American

investors. ScottishPower obtained a US listing last year.

Mr Robinson said the deal was abandoned after two months of due diligence and talks with Florida when it became clear the acquisition would not deliver sufficient value for shareholders.

ScottishPower believes it can extract the same level of efficiency savings from a US utility as it had achieved with its UK acquisitions, Manweb and Southern Water, where staff levels have been reduced by one-third.

In the UK, the group plans to press ahead with its multi-utility strategy, with the aim of capturing 15 per cent of the electricity market by 2000, 12 per cent of the gas market and doubling its share of the Scottish telecoms market to 10 per cent.

Since the opening up of the gas market, it has captured 320,000 domestic customers and is in the first wave of electricity liberalisation, with its Scottish and Manweb areas due to open to competition in September.

Electricity exports from Scotland, meanwhile, are set to increase by 50 per cent early next century with the completion of the north-south interconnector and a new link being constructed to Northern Ireland.

Pre-tax profits last year rose 15 per cent to £640m, helped by a full-year contribution from Southern Water, where savings of £120m have been achieved.

Sterling slips as rate fear recedes

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

THE BANK of England's Monetary Policy Committee is expected to leave interest rates unchanged at the end of its two-day meeting today, with many analysts increasingly confident that there will be no further rises in the cost of borrowing.

This view held sway on the foreign exchanges, where the pound fell again. It ended down almost a penny at DM2.933.

There was some caution, however, as the MPC's meeting comes just ahead of next week's quarterly Inflation Report. The Bank has been considering publishing two inflation forecasts, reflecting the gap between hawk and doves on the committee over the risk of a sudden fall in the pound which could push inflation above its 2.5 per cent target.

The MPC vote was split four-four in March, with Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, using his casting vote to leave rates unchanged. Minutes of April's meeting will be published next week, but according to unconfirmed reports one of the hawks, Charles Goodhart, switched to make it a five-three vote for no change.

A survey yesterday suggesting a slight slowdown in activity in the service industries was seen as no threat to hopes that this month will also bring no move on rates, even though it showed that services were continuing to expand very rapidly. The index from the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply survey of purchasing managers fell to 59.1 in April from 60.3 the previous month.

Peter Thomson, director general of CIPS, said home demand was still very strong. "The service sector, with less exposure to the exchange rate and international competition, is enjoying the benefits of the UK market."

The modest slowdown during the month was mainly due to slower growth in new busi-

ness, down from 59.7 to 57.2 in April. Mainly due to the strong pound hitting overseas demand, this was the slowest expansion since October.

However, demand remained at a high level, with more than one in four firms reporting an increase in new business. This was twice as many as reported a decrease.

The pace of growth of employment dropped last month too, but this was due to skill shortages rather than redundancies, according to the survey. Skill shortages led to inflationary pressure on wages and salaries, especially for computer and IT companies. More than one in five companies said their average costs were on the increase, six times as many as reported a decline in costs.

This took the costs component of the index up from 58.2 to 58.9, its highest level for a year. One in 10 companies raised the prices they charged customers as a result of passing on higher costs.

Optimism in the service sector picked up last month after its recent dent from the strong pound and the Asian crisis. Almost 60 per cent of the companies surveyed expect their business to grow during the next 12 months.

The survey confirmed the contrast between the health of services and home demand and the weakness of manufacturers dependent on exports. Stephen Hannah, chief economist at IBI International, said: "We will see some weakness in the manufacturing sector filter through to services as the year progresses, but it is a fairly slow-grinding process."

Some City economists remained concerned about rising wage costs, saying these might yet force the Bank of England into raising interest rates at some point. Ciaran Barr of Deutsche Morgan Grenfell said: "I do not think this is the start of a major downturn in the service sector."



New vistas: Preparations for the topping out of Citibank's headquarters at Canary Wharf in London Docklands yesterday

Photograph: Rui Xavier

Pressure of competition puts heat on Whitbread

SHARES in Whitbread, the brewing to leisure group, fell yesterday in the wake of a cautious trading statement, taking the share off a 12 per cent rise in its full-year profits.

In the year to the end of February, the group reported profits before tax and exceptional items of £354.8m, up from £316.5m. Brokers had forecast profits of between £348m and £360m.

However, the group's shares were off 2 per cent or 30p at 1,060p, while shares in its rival Bass fell 34p to 1082p.

Merrill Lynch analyst Philip Hawkins said: "We have put in a small downgrade for the first time in several years, in the region of 1 to 2 per cent. The period of upgrades for Whitbread has come to an end for the time being."

"It's mainly because returns at the tail end of the estate are under pressure, which is dragging down the overall number. It shows things are very competitive, especially in London."

Whitbread shares have outperformed the brewing sector by some 20 per cent over five years. There are mounting concerns in the investment community that the high levels of corporate expenditure on managed pubs has become harder to recover given the number of new and aggressive competitors coupled with the risk of a downturn in consumer spending.

Analysts estimate the industry spent £800m to £1bn last year on buying new sites or refurbishing existing pubs. It is estimated that more than half of this went into food pubs.

The group plans to spend about £450m in the coming year, a similar amount to last year, with most of the investment concentrated on the group's managed pub estate. Whitbread's 1,700 managed pub estate includes Brewers Fayre and Hogshhead.

The company said it would continue to shed pubs and off-licences that underperformed at a similar rate over the coming year. It sold some 500 outlets to realise £144m in the year.

All of the group's divisions grew profits in the year. Beer improved trading profit 12 per cent to £44.6m, although total sales were lower due to falling sales of older, wine, spirits and flavoured alcoholic drinks. Its premium lager Stella Artois increased sales by 27 per cent.

Liffe may lose US trade to Germany

By Lea Paterson

TWO large US investment houses are considering shifting all euro interest rate derivatives trade - an area Liffe has traditionally dominated - away from the London exchange to its German arch-rival.

Both Salomon Smith Barney and Chase Manhattan said yesterday there were benefits in trading on the Deutsche Terminborse (DTB), which uses electronic trading.

Rob Standing, managing director of interest rate management at Chase Manhattan in London, said the bank could switch all Euromark trading to DTB in 1999, and that it would be easier to conduct all the bank's business with just one exchange. Simon Bowden of

Salomon said it was "inefficient" to trade interest rates in an open outcry environment.

Liffe has traditionally been firmly wedded to open outcry, although recently said it hoped to introduce a "state-of-the-art" electronic trading system by autumn next year. It has been engaged in a fierce battle for market share with the DTB, and has lost the bulk of the trade in the prestigious German bond (Bund) future to the German exchange.

Yesterday's news suggests Liffe's position in short-term interest rate (Stir) products, an area it has historically dominated, could be under threat. Liffe's success in the Stir market is largely due to the complexity of the products - current electronic trading platforms cannot replicate the trading of

these products in the pit. However, Liffe traders said improvements in electronic trading would gradually erode the benefits of open outcry trading for Stir products.

A Liffe spokesperson said he was "surprised" by the two banks' comments.

The comments will be further food for thought for Liffe's board, which met yesterday to discuss proposals for reform of the exchange. The board has already recommended a move to electronic trading, a streamlining of Liffe's management and the adoption of a "for profit" objective.

The outcome of the board's latest deliberations will be communicated to its 215 members early next week. Members will vote on these proposals at an extraordinary meeting on 21 May.

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7 May 1998

House of Fraser to fight lawsuit by Linea

HOUSE of Fraser, the department store group, is to fight a legal action against it by the fashion retailer Linea. The London-based Italian fashion boutique has alleged its business has suffered since House of Fraser launched its in-house brand, also called Linea.

The firm is seeking an injunction to stop House of Fraser using the Linea name.

A House of Fraser spokesman said the company

would defend the lawsuit, filed on 31 March.

Francesco Lazzaro, Linea's owner, said his business has been severely disrupted by confusion in the marketplace surrounding

House of Fraser's Linea brand. In a High Court writ, Linea is seeking an injunction to stop House of Fraser using the Linea name and to offer up for destruction all materials relating to it.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Anglo Irish Bank (Q)	11.1	21.5m (13.7m)	8.41p (4.22p)	1.85p (+)
B Brown (F)	217.8m (200.47m)	41.2m (27.1m)	19.2p (17.0p)	7.5 (6.5p)
Bsky (Q)	1.98m (0.88m)	203.3m (215.3m)	10.8p (11.5p)	- (+)
Carbo (F)	56.04m (50.77m)	0.67m (0.81m)	0.82p (0.41p)	1.3p (1.3p)
Edge Properties (F)	23.23m (16.38m)	1.545m (1.095m)	3.8 (2.7p)	nil
Grainthorpe (F)	22.20m (16.38m)	3.05m (2.845m)	1.95p (1.23p)	0.4p (+)
Lambert Smith (F)	42.14m (32.35m)	3.8m (1.8m)	15.5p (10.5p)	4.5p (1.5p)
J Sainsbury (F)	15.50m (14.31m)	718m (808m)	26.1p (22.0p)	13.9p (12.3p)
Scottish Power (F)	3.13m (2.55m)	630.8m (551.4m)	41.28p (38.11p)	20.4p (18.5p)
Solent Appliances (Q)	150296.9m (207.9m)	15.92m (8.78m)	- (+)	- (+)
Style (F)	324.3m (248.8m)	0.703m (2.8m)	0.31p (0.5p)	4.00p (4.60p)
Tate & Lyle (Q)	2.20m (2.28m)	75.5m (30.4m)	12.7p (4.5p)	6.3p (5.3p)
Time Payments (F)	39.99m (102.55m)	17.17m (22.00m)	21.17p (23.17p)	12.5p (12.0p)
Whitbread (F)	3.20m (3.03m)	354.8m (316.5m)	55.60p (48.78p)	26.02p (23.80p)
WMA Carbone (Q)	- (+)	43.1m (43.7m)	8.5p (7.0p)	1.75p (1.65p)
(F) - Final (Q) - Interim (M) - Nine Months (Y) - Yearly + EPS in pre-exceptional * Dividend to be paid as a JD				

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25/SHARES

THE INDEPENDENT
THURSDAY 7 MAY 1998

BT dials up gains on talk of bid action

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

IS THE telephone about to ring for BT? Shares of Britain's major entry into the global telephony industry soared 29.5p to a 693p peak in often busy trading.

Although the Stock Exchange's controversial order book often distorts closing prices, it looked as though a rush of late orders pushed the shares to their new high.

The sudden display of interest was accompanied by stories of corporate action, including a bid for full control of the Cellnet mobile telephone operation to another ambitious overseas strike. There was also talk that, as the world's communications industry submerged national boundaries, what was once the button A of Britain's call boxes was about to collect an overseas bid.

This week a number of analysts have advocated BT's merits, many suggesting the shares should be riding at more than 700p.

BT was a major influence in a late Footsie rally which left the index sporting a 5.9 points gain at 5,992.4. Underlining the volatility which followed the arrival of order-driven trading the index was ousting a 26.3 point loss just 30 minutes before the final call over.

Mid and small cap shares again displayed complete indifference to the gyrations of their peers. The supporting indices resolutely advanced to new peaks.

J Sainsbury's results and the change of chairman lifted the shares 22.25p to 502.25p but Whitbread's cautious comments with its figures lowered the shares 30p to 1,060p, dragging Bass down 34p to 1,082p. The former building societies were for a time in more robust form, after their recent weakness. Alliance & Leicester led the recovery after making much more confident noises at its shareholders meeting than had been expected. After easing fears of

a mortgage war, its shares gained 29.5p to 862p; Halifax, still buying in shares, was at one time up 22p at 804p. The shares closed just 4p higher at 786p, illustrating the disillusionment with its buy-back programme which has so far, as expected, failed to produce little in the way of benefits for its army of small shareholders.

Exporters made further headway and the possibility of a deal between Daimler-Benz and Chrysler prompted gains in a host of engineering and electrical groups as theories of further potential deals surfaced. Smiths Industries jumped 66p to 965p; General Electric Co 31p to 521p and British Aerospace 29.5p to 532.5p. Siebe, up 46p to 1,444p and BTR, up 4.75p to 204.5p, joined in the fun.

Sugar group Tate & Lyle dropped 24p to 460p on results but Select Appointments, the recruitment group, jumped 63.5p to 893.5p following a

buoyant first-quarter trading report. The shares are near their year's high. However, back in 1988 they topped 2,000p.

Deals continued to stir the undercard. Seton Healthcare's proposed acquisition of Scholl, famed for its foot hygiene, pushed the shares 45p higher to 708.5p. Scholl jumped 68.5p to 448.5p. The

near £700m deal should have pushed the enlarged group into the Footsie 250 mid cap index.

Cliveden, the hotelier, firmed to 92.5p. The bid is expected to come in at around 115p. Jeyes, famed for its disinfectant, added 25p to 187.5p as the company revealed a bid approach.

Rumours of bids went the rounds. Associated British Ports rose 17p to 375p on speculation of an overseas strike and Latchways, a business support group, rose 35p to 337.5p.

Chemo Wellcome lost 24p to 1,711p despite a Salomon Smith Barney estimate that the shares should be around 2,000p; Zeneca, down 22p to 2,578p, was awarded a 2,900p target.

ML Laboratories had a

difficult time. The drugs group fell 7.5p to 75.5p, equalling its low point. An attempted Merrill Lynch placing of around 125,000 shares apparently did the damage. The shares touched 468.75p two years ago. They have been in decline since the group moved out of losses into profits.

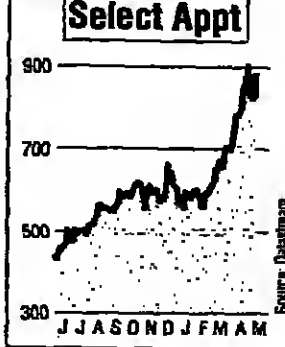
Pilkington, the glass maker, put on 4.5p to 136.5p, highest this year. Good figures from arch rival Saint Gobain and consolidation in the European glass industry provided the impetus.

West 175 Enterprises, making "lifestyle" television programmes, surged 20p to 85p. John Gunn has acquired another 10,000 shares and now has just over 5 per cent. His buying coincides with a BBC deal. The company and the Beeb are launching a cookery series on US television.

Amstrad rose 3p to 39.5p as chairman Alan Sugar picked up 3.5 million shares at 35.5p. He now has 29.8 per cent.

Share Spotlight

Share price, pence



TAKING STOCK

EMERALD Energy has shrugged off the disappointment over its Chawina site in Colombia and its rig has moved to what many regard as the far more promising Gigante 1 field. Drilling is expected to start next week.

Monmouth Oil & Gas is investing £7.3m and has a 14 per cent interest in Gigante 1. Its involvement could be extended to 40 per cent. Emerald's shares rose 0.5p to 67.5p. They touched 10p earlier this year. The 12-month low is 4p.

HARD PRESSED Reflex, a maker of reflective ink which helps clothes glow in the dark, firmed to 6.5p after its revamped exercise was approved.

Under new management the company has been reshaped, with costs reduced and salesmen put on a new incentive scheme. The shares once enjoyed an AIM star rating. They arrived at 40p; then stormed to almost 130p. As difficulties mounted they fell to a 6p low.

52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	YTD	PERC	52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	YTD	PERC
100	100	100	Alcoholic Beverages	100.00	-1.00	-4.00	-4.00	100	100	100	Alcoholic Beverages	100.00	-1.00	-4.00	-4.00
100	100	100	Alcoholic Beverages	100.00	-1.00	-4.00	-4.00	100	100	100	Alcoholic Beverages	100.00	-1.00	-4.00	-4.00
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52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	YTD	PERC	52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	YTD	PERC
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, says

Inadequate rules on weight loss give cause for grave concern

NEWS that Spencer Oliver is likely to make a full recovery from the brain injury he sustained at the Royal Albert Hall last Saturday ought not to suggest that everything possible has been done to lessen the perils of boxing.

Medical safeguards put in place seven years ago after Michael Watson was left paralysed following a violent defeat against Chris Eubank were unquestionably critical to Oliver's welfare when he collapsed in the ring after being knocked out by Sergei Devakov in defence of the European super-bantamweight title.

Of course, it is impossible to make the hardest sport entirely safe, but as Oliver is the third fighter to be seriously hurt in a British

ring since June last year there is room for even closer scrutiny.

Oliver's relieved manager, Jess Harding, who cannot be held accountable, insists that the 23-year-old from Barset experienced no problems in making the stipulated super-bantamweight limit of 8st 10lb despite being a few ounces over shortly before he went to the scales last Friday.

However, it is unlikely that Oliver found himself entirely comfortable at the poundage and was, in common with many of his contemporaries, perhaps fighting lower down the weight scale than caution advises.

Acting on the established link between dehydration and brain

damage, plenty of people in boxing believe that the British Board's guidelines on weight loss are inadequate. Certainly, no more important issue should have been on the Board's agenda when it met yesterday.

To my mind, it is no coincidence that heavyweights, for whom an appearance on the scales is a mere formality, are seldom involved in the kind of incident that again brought deep anxiety to the ring-side last Saturday.

The manager who told me this week of fighters and trainers attempting to cheat on weight was speaking of a matter that should be addressed urgently by the sport's administrators.



KEN JONES

Some of the stories are frightening. In 1990, after a hard contest against Chris Eubank for the World Boxing Organisation middleweight championship that saw him stopped in the ninth round, it was revealed

that Nigel Benn was 5lb overweight 48 hours before the weigh-in; this in the week that a 'communication' from the Commonwealth body had warned managers of the dangers associated with dehydration.

If the introduction of 'junior' or 'super' championships enabled boxers to avoid the weakening effect of trying to come in below their natural weight, the problem has not been eliminated. Responsibility rests with the boxing authorities but an important truth is that the fighters themselves cannot be trusted.

Taken long before big changes in the administration of British boxing, a famous picture shows the former world flyweight champion, Jackie Patterson of Scotland, after being

knocked out in the seventh round by Rinty Monaghan. Looking as though just released from a concentration camp, Patterson had spent the night before the contest sitting next to a boiler wrapped in a blanket.

A world-wide decision to move weigh-ins back 24 hours has alleviated the most serious problems in weight making (fighters often enter the ring considerably heavier than they were on the scales) but the damage may already have been done by miscalculation. One fighter admits privately that he got with-in weight for a title contest only by starving himself for the final two days of preparation and taking a laxative.

The terrible injuries sustained by

Gerald McClellan in 1995 when defending the World Boxing Council super-middleweight title against Nigel Benn brought about stricter monitoring of weight before championship contests. What this suggests is that some boxers and trainers are culpable.

As I stated in the aftermath of last week's disturbing experience, some of us who have been around boxing for many years and think it to be the most basic, natural and uncomplicated of athletic competitions have been given cause to wonder whether it is worth the candle.

This is not to suggest that Oliver and his associates took chances. But those who do must be punished with the utmost severity.

Jansen's low-key approach faces final passion test

NERVOUSNESS led Celtic to throw away another chance to clinch the Scottish League title last weekend, conceding a late equaliser to Dunfermline. Their failure inspired Charlie Nicholas to muse: "There is one massive cloud hanging over the club after that result. I honestly believe that if Celtic blow the title, they will never recover from it."

Nicholas, a former Parkhead idol and the kind of exciting and effective striker who would not go amiss in the green and white hoops now, clearly fears for the effect on morale of blowing the chance to break Rangers' stranglehold on the title after 10 years.

The understated Wim Jansen has had only 10 months as Celtic's manager to steer the club out of that nightmare decade. His arrival caught everyone by surprise, but the shock was as nothing when compared to Jansen's introduction to Glasgow's rivalries.

The 53-year-old former Dutch international has admitted that he did not quite comprehend the scale of the Old Firm's grip on the people who follow them. Anything less than the three points which Celtic owed from their final league match at home to St Johnstone on Saturday to edge out Rangers and deny their greatest rivals that record 10th title and, it seems, the club night disintegrate.

Celtic's 45,000 season ticket holders - an average attendance of 50,000 has made the club the ninth best supported in Europe - have already bought their seats for next season. But whether they and the thousands of children who flood the club superstore will continue to do so on the back of a championship capitulation is questionable.

The ripples of failure will spread far and wide, too. Celtic have more than 2,000 registered supporters in Toronto

On Saturday Celtic have a last chance to stop Rangers taking a 10th successive Scottish title. Phil Gordon looks at the man behind the team

alone. There are more in the United States and Australia and even one recently exiled Glasgow priest in São Paulo who keeps up to date with his other faith via the Celtic Web site. Those who follow one of Europe's biggest clubs will be willing Jansen, this most cosmopolitan of coaches, to perform the most parochial of jobs: to put one over on Rangers.

It is not an exaggeration to suggest that the future of an organisation which had a turnover of more than £21m last year and is worth about £100m on the stock market rests on the shoulders of a quiet man who seems to have silenced a tradition of passion on the pitch.

While Arsène Wenger has stilled any criticism of his own uncharismatic presence by producing a brash and eye-catching Arsenal team which is the antithesis of his coach, his old adversary north of the border has merely made Celtic in his image.

Wenger and Jansen encountered each other in Japan's J-League where Wenger coached Grampus Eight and Jansen was in charge of Sanfrecce Hiroshima. Both met scepticism when they beat more favoured names to land two of the biggest jobs in Britain. In Jansen's case, it was Bobby Robson, whom most Celtic fans, and the club chairman, Fergus McCann, had pinned their hopes on; at the time the former England manager was stepping down at Barcelona.

Jansen has had to win over a lot of doubters, which he began to do after disastrously giving Rangers a six-point start in the league by losing the opening two matches. He made Celtic a tighter, more compact side who were more tactically aware: as

Liverpool almost found to their cost in the UEFA Cup. Yet despite a four-month unbeaten league run that ended in the recent defeat by Rangers at Ibrox, Jansen's caution has centered a side that is now too scared to commit to attack, even if it had the resources.

Supporters who gorged themselves last season on 70 goals alone from their erstwhile strikers Pierre van Hooijdonk, Jorge Cadete and Paolo Di Canio have been fed a meagre 62 Premier goals this term. Three wins in the last eight matches reflects the fact that their goal touch has deserted them during the run-in.

Quite what the Dutchman makes of it is a mystery. Jansen, who has a clause in his three-year contract that would allow him to bail out at the end of the season, only speaks to the media at pre- and post-match conferences and does not do one-to-one interviews. The man who played in two World Cup finals for the Dutch may be, as Johan Cruyff said of his former colleague, "one of only four people in the world worth talking football to" but few outside his Parkhead dressing-room can testify to that.

Jansen's players defend his honour. "Wim treats you like an adult," the central defender Alan Stubbs said. "He asks your opinion, even if it's a critical one. Let's just say that he is a bit different to Bruce Riech, my manager at Bolton."

In the spirit of Dutch free thinking, Jansen ditched the traditional club hideaway before big games. "The players said they would prefer to be at home rather than stuck in a hotel a way from their own beds," the midfielder Phil O'Donnell explained,



Wim Jansen's faltering Celtic have one last hurdle to clear in pursuit of salvation

Photograph: Scottish Daily Record

"so be agreed. He tries to make it as low key as possible."

Maybe too low-key. Celtic have lacked the spark that characterised previous generations of green and white. Will it be possible to be low key on Saturday against St Johnstone with a title at stake? That is Jansen's aim. "We know there will be a lot of tension," he said after the dis-

appointment at East End Park last Sunday. "But we can cope. It was not pressure that cost us at Dunfermline but one goal that came out of nothing. Otherwise, we were seven minutes away from winning the league."

"Everyone keeps asking us about the pressures of the championship. I don't want my players thinking that, so we

train as normal and behave as we always have."

Jansen the player was in the Feyenoord team who defeated Celtic to win the European Cup in 1970, and in the great Dutch team he was the gruff presence behind the flamboyance of Cruyff and Johan Neeskens. Yet any attempt to elicit an anecdote or two has proved

fruitless. Like his side he gives nothing away. "I don't like looking back," he says. "It is the same here. Anything that has gone wrong is in the past, so I forget it and move on to the next game."

Celtic's supporters will know by 4.40pm on Saturday if Jansen has given them cause to look back in anger.

Numan follows coach to Rangers

By Rupert Meechall

RANGERS yesterday began their summer rebuilding programme by agreeing to pay a reported £5m for PSV Eindhoven's Dutch international defender, Arthur Numan.

The 29-year-old left-back, who is expected to be a starter for the Netherlands at the World Cup, is following the PSV coach, Dick Advocaat, who is replacing Walter Smith at Ibrox, to Scotland.

"This is my first buy for Rangers and there will be a minimum of three others - maybe from Holland or maybe from other countries," Advocaat said. Not so happy was the PSV chairman, Harry van Raay. He said: "I am disappointed because Numan has chosen to go to Rangers, which I cannot understand. If I was a player, I would not have chosen Scotland for my career."

Juninho, Atletico Madrid's former Middlesbrough midfielder, yesterday expressed his frustration over his omission from Brazil's World Cup squad. Brazil's coach, Mario Zagallo, said on Tuesday when naming the squad that he was concerned about Juninho's fitness after a three-month absence following a broken ankle suffered in early February.

However, yesterday Juninho said: "I have totally recovered. I did everything I could to be ready to play in the World Cup. There are certain players who do not maintain good discipline and yet bag all the prizes going. I am going to have to reflect whether it's worth having that discipline or not."

Ron Noades, the Crystal Palace chairman, has helped pave the way for the completion of the sale of the club to Mark Goldberg by loaning him money to buy the freehold to Selhurst Park, which Goldberg needs as security on Palace's £5m overdraft. Noades said yesterday that he had received invitations to buy four other clubs, including Brentford.

All eyes on Luyt as Springboks fear boycott

Rugby Union

By Chris Hewett

VERNON PUGH and the International Rugby Board may consider England's Premiership clubs to be the root of all evil to be found in the world game, but the forces propelling South Africa towards another debilitating period of isolation make the political ructions at Twickenham look like a church

fête. Today, the leading Springbok Test players were meeting with lawyers to prepare the ground for legal action in the event of a cancellation of this summer's tour programme.

The country's National Sports Council has given Louis Luyt, the self-styled Mr Big of Springbok rugby, until the end of today to resign as president of the South African Rugby Football Union and take his entire 13-man executive with him.

The Sarfu hierarchy, due to meet in Johannesburg, was expected to stand firm in spite of appeals from provincial unions, major sponsors, broadcasters and players, including Chester Williams, the only black member of the Springboks' 1995 World Cup-winning squad.

"If they dig in, we've got trouble on our hands," said one Sarfu insider yesterday. "The NSC will not be content with asking unions around the world to can-

cel their summer tours. They will also go straight to government level and say they cannot guarantee the safety of rugby tourists. A boycott would almost certainly mean the Springbok players taking court action for loss of earnings. After all, their livelihood is at stake."

England, Ireland, Wales, Australia and New Zealand are all scheduled to play in South Africa over the next four months. "With the government

behind the NSC, I believe they could bring about a boycott," said Keith Parkinson, president of the powerful Natal province. "I don't even want to think about that. This province believes that the solution is for Dr Luyt to stand down, but I doubt very much if it will happen."

Williams, an enduring symbol of the 1995 "Rainbow Nation" Springboks, pleaded with Luyt to quit. "I think the tours should go ahead and the Sarfu

president is the one who can save them by resigning," said the Western Province wing.

The NSC has accused Luyt and his colleagues of allowing racism, nepotism and corruption to contaminate their running of the game and were angered by the union's decision to force President Mandela into testifying in court during Sarfu's successful hounding of a move to appoint a legal commission with powers of inquiry.

Stark to let loose on The Moose

Equestrianism

By Genevieve Murphy

IAN STARK could have three horses shortlisted for October's World Equestrian Games in Italy if The Moose, a giant of 18 hands, achieves a good all-round performance in the Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials which begin today in Gloucestershire.

Stark has already impressed with Arakai (10th in the European Open Championships at Burghley last year) and with his most recent acquisition, Saucy Brown (fourth in the inaugural four-star contest in Kentucky last month). The Moose, who was fifth at Blenheim last year, could add further distinction to Stark's yard in the Scottish Borders.

"The Moose has very good movement, so he is capable of doing well in the dressage," Stark said. "But he is a bit spooky and he may want to have a good look at the judges' boxes." Despite his size, the big horse has proved to be neat and nimble across country.

If well-placed after Saturday's big test, Stark will be re-

lieved to know that his partner is usually a reliable show jumper. Last year the Scot dropped from first to 13th with five show jumping errors on Stanwick Ghout.

In the absence of Mary King (whose two top horses have sustained minor injuries) and William Fox-Pitt (who has broken his ankle) Stark and Christopher Bartle will be the only members of Britain's winning European Championship team competing at Badminton. As always, they will be keeping a sharp look-out for the New Zealanders - in particular the Olympic gold medalists, Mark Todd and Blyth Tait.

Todd will be riding Broadcast News, the winner at Burghley last year. Tait partners Aspyring and his 1996 Olympic champion, Ready Teddy. The charged atmosphere may, however, prove distracting for Ready Teddy in the dressage. "Ted won't find it easy in that atmosphere, though he is more mature this year," Tait said of the 10-year-old. It would be helpful if the horse's memory of his thrilling victory lap in Atlanta, where he took a reckless gallop in front of 20,000 cheering spectators, has faded.

McRae's Corsican triumph

Rallying

COLIN MCRAE became the first driver to win two rounds of this year's world championship yesterday after his victory in the Corsica Rally. The Scot, driving a Subaru Impreza, finished ahead of the Frenchman François Delecour and Italy's Piero Liatti.

McRae, who also won the same rally last year, has now taken two of the six championship rounds so far this season and overtakes Carlos Sainz of Spain, at the top of the standings.

McRae, who survived a disqualification scare for illegal tyres on Monday, finished the "Rally of 10,000 Corners" 27.2sec clear of Delecour, who was driving a Peugeot 306 Maxi.

He had an overall time of 4hr 2min 46.9sec, with teammate Liatti less than three seconds behind Delecour in third. The win puts McRae in pole position in the title race on 24 points after six of 14 events, ahead of Sainz (22) and England's Richard Burns (18).

Sainz had a miserable day. Lying in second after the middle leg, he slipped back to

eighth after his Toyota suffered mechanical problems.

Subaru - seeking a fourth straight title - now lead the constructors' championship with 35 points, ahead of Mitsubishi and Toyota on 32 and Ford (25). The China Rally will be included in the world championship next season, the International Automobile Federation president, Max Mosley, said yesterday. However, the number of rallies, which stands at 14, would almost certainly not be increased. "The problem is logistics and transport for the teams," he said.

Golf

GREG NORMAN has given his strongest hint yet that he may be ready to quit the game. Norman, who is out of action for five months after undergoing shoulder surgery, claimed yesterday that he will pack up his clubs forever if he is unable to rekindle his enthusiasm for the sport. "I get more pain than pleasure now by going to the golf course," the Australian said.

"That has to change or I'll hang them up - in a heartbeat - if I can't turn that around."

Norman, who turned 43 in February, has always said that he would review his career in the year 2000. But with his business career booming and his success on the course waning, Norman has not ruled out retiring before the millennium. Before going under the surgeon's knife, Norman's form this year was uncharacteristically poor. The world's top-ranked golfer for most of the past decade has slipped to No 4 in the rankings.

Norman, who holds the dubious honour of being the only player in history to lose all four

majors in play-offs, will miss this year's three remaining majors.

"I think people believe I'm more tormented than I really am [about losing majors]. The Masters I blew to Faldo in 1996. I was back in the office the next day," Norman said.

"If my kids can see what [my wife] Laura and I have left them when we're gone, and say 'thanks', yet still retain their initiative to do more and do better, then that's more important than the US Masters. That's the tournament of life. That's the one I want to win."

Thorpe rights captains' wrongs

Cricket

David Llewellyn
reports from Canterbury

Kent 260; Surrey 261-4
Surrey win by four wickets

ENGLAND'S two captains had one of those days at Canterbury yesterday. One fell on his sword, the other was put to it. The dismissal of the Test captain, Alec Stewart, and Adam Holoake, England's one-day leader, looked suspect at the very least. Honour was served though as holders Surrey, in beating Kent in a reprise of last year's Benson and Hedges Cup final, moved through to a home tie in the quarter-finals.

They did so with the help of yet another superbly judged half century - his third on the trot in this competition this season - from the Gold Award winner Graham Thorpe. The England left-hander finished unbeaten on 85 as he saw Surrey home with three overs to spare.

There was never any chance that Stewart would contest Min Patel's claim for a caught and bowled. He was barely 24 hours into his new job and would not want a controversial start to his reign. But although the third umpire was not called, television replays indicated that the return drive by Stewart was grounded before being embraced awkwardly by Kent's slow left-arm bowler.

The umpire John Harris did not spot anything wrong and Stewart, after a nano second's hesitation, walked before the umpire could raise his finger, having



Surrey's Alec Stewart, the new England captain, runs out Kent's Alan Wells at Canterbury yesterday

Photograph: Peter Jay

ing made a good-looking 40. Later Patel said: "As far as I was concerned I caught the ball cleanly," Stewart said: "Min nodded his head. The umpire nodded his head. I've got no problems with Min. I wandered off."

Adam Holoake replaced him and the hoodoo struck again. He was within sight of his half-century when Matthew Fleming sent down a leg-side. The ball rebounded off the wicketkeeper Steve Marsh's chest and gloves before dislodging the stumps. The replay showed Holoake was not out of his ground when the ball was

dislodged, but the appeal for a stumping was upheld by umpire Harris at square leg.

To suffer one run-out may be deemed unfortunate, to suffer two an unlucky coincidence, but for Kent to allow three was downright careless. Matthew Walker, Alan Wells and Carl

Hooper all departed to run-outs, and only Walker's could be put down to the opposition's brilliance. The others were foolish. Hooper was in full flow when he fell for 69.

To make matters worse for Kent, in the same over they had already lost Mark Ealham after

a belligerent half century in better than even time. He fell to the leg-spinner Ian Salisbury, who ended with a very respectable 2 for 36. Thankfully Marsh was able to fly the Surrey attack for 18 brutal balls in which he made 37, including two sixes in Saglam Mushtaq's last over.

Keiron Cunningham is a 50-50 proposition to start his first Super League game this year following a groin operation. Wigan have contacted Saints officially to deny reports that they are trying to sign Cunningham in time for next season.

Saints to lend youngsters

Rugby League

Dave Hadfield

ST HELENS are planning to lend three of their most promising young players to their sister club in Worcester. Saints want to broaden the experience of some of their Academy players by letting them play for the Midlands side - also the Saints - in the Rugby League Conference.

The club's chief executive, David Howes, said that the League had been asked to give the go-ahead to the ground-breaking scheme. "We have put a lot of work into our twinning arrangement with Worcester and would be all in favour of some of our young players turning out for them - but only if we can get a policy decision from the League," he said.

St Helens' prop forward, Apollo Perini, will start his first Super League match of the season at Bradford on Sunday after recovering from a knee injury he suffered in March. Paul Southcombe will also return after a thigh strain.

Keiron Cunningham is a 50-50 proposition to start his first Super League game this year following a groin operation. Wigan have contacted Saints officially to deny reports that they are trying to sign Cunningham in time for next season.

The consortium bidding for a Super League franchise for Cardiff has the verbal agreement of four international players based in Australia that they would join the club for its inaugural season. The players - three Australians and a New Zealander - have all had talks about coming to the Welsh capital next season.

The consortium has also discussed the possibility of playing at the Cardiff Bay Stadium when it is built early in the millennium, although its initial home would be with the Cardiff rugby union team at the Arms Park. Cardiff faces competition for the franchise from Swansea, which already has the backing of Super League's managing director, Maurice Lindsay.

The former Australian Test forward, Rod Reddy, could look to Britain after being sacked as coach by the Adelaide Rams. Reddy, who once coached Barrow, has been replaced by the former Perth coach, Dean Lance.

Muster slams claims of retirement

Tennis

THOMAS MUSTER founded the seedings yesterday when he became the first player to reach the third round of the German Open in Hamburg and then launched a scathing attack on claims that he was ready to retire.

Muster won a battle of former French Open champions against the third-seeded Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia and then said he had the feeling that "people have been trying to bury me alive".

Muster was incensed at an item on the official ATP website, which was the opinion of a doctor who Muster said had not seen him for six months. "I read on the ATP Internet that I was preparing for retirement, which is bullshit," Muster said.

British No 1 Greg Rusedski is the No 2 seed for the Stella Artois Championships. Tim Henman is sixth seed for the event at the Queen's Club, London, starting on June 8.

Maloney denies offer to Couch

Boxing

THE boxing promoter Frank Maloney yesterday denied that he made an offer to stage contests involving Jane Couch, Britain's only female world boxing champion.

Couch had an application for a professional licence rejected last year, but she claimed sexual discrimination against the British Boxing Board of Control and an industrial tribunal ruled in her favour. She has now been recommended for a licence by the BBBC's Western Area Council.

"I have been losing big money without that precious piece of paper they call a licence," Couch said. "Before Christmas I had to turn down £10,000 at Wembley from Maloney."

However, Maloney said that offer was made by someone else and added: "I will not work on any show featuring a women boxer. I flatly deny making any offer myself."

House party piece

WILL HOUSE produced a memorable all-round performance as the British Universities shocked Gloucestershire with a seven-run victory - despite a defiant, unbeaten century from Jack Russell - in the Benson and Hedges Cup at Bristol yesterday.

The 22-year-old Kent player House blasted 64 off just 44 balls as the students posted an impressive 279 for 5 from their 50 overs in the Group C tie. Then he weighed in with 5 for 58 to take the Gold Award and peg Gloucestershire at 272 for 9, notwithstanding Russell's one-day best 119 not out and 93 from Toby Wright.

Gloucestershire only had themselves to blame after spilling three catches in an

abysmal fielding display after winning the toss. Russell and Wright's great efforts apart, the home batting was unimpressive too, with opener Tim Hancock's 16 the next best score.

The Universities captain, Anurag Singh, set the tone by hitting 56 off 88 balls, with four boundaries. He shared a second-wicket stand of 96 with Mark Chilton. Then came the acceleration the Universities needed, with House smashing two sixes and seven fours in his 64, made off just 44 deliveries.

Gloucestershire were soon in deep trouble at 29 for 3 in reply before a stand between Russell and Wright added 207 for the fourth wicket. Russell's runs came off 137 balls, with a six and eight fours, while

Wright's 93 was scored off 99 deliveries with 10 boundaries - and together they seemed to have turned the game Gloucestershire's way. But the students held some excellent catches in the closing stages and capitalised on some woeful efforts by the home lower order.

A sixth-wicket stand of 83 in 11 overs between Durham's Martin Speight and Mike Foster yesterday wrecked Scotland's hopes of their third Benson and Hedges Cup win in 19 years. The Scots made 210 for 6 after choosing to bat at Chester-le-Street and looked certain winners when they reduced Durham to 120 for 5 in the 37th over. But Speight hit 55 and Foster 35 to set up a two-wicket win with nine balls to spare.

Northants lost in Maddy world

Mike Carey
reports from Northampton

Northamptonshire 198-9
Leicestershire 199-2
Leicestershire win by eight wickets

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE have invariably been slow starters in recent seasons and events here yesterday, when they were outclassed from start to finish by Leicestershire, will hardly have done much for morale in their dressing-room.

Things will doubtless start to improve when a few batsmen manage to find their touch, most importantly perhaps Rob Bailey, around whom so much seems to be built, but they could only have watched Leicestershire's Darren Maddy and Iain Sutherland with admiration and a certain amount of envy.

This pair laid the foundation for a win which was achieved with 10 overs to spare, by putting on 123 together. As a left and right-hand combination, they made the most of the generous width offered them. But there was more to it. There appears to be a vacancy for an opener for England team and if new blood is required, the credentials of not only Maddy, who had a wonderful A team tour last winter, but his partner, are worthy of close examination.

Maddy, almost old-fashioned in his correct upright technique, was a joy to watch. The angular, left-handed Southcliffe, who seems to see the ball earlier than most, has many of the characteristics of Bill Lawry, not least around his off stump.

Together they closed the door on Northamptonshire and

make the most of a hard, dry pitch which was a credit to groundsman David Bates. Northamptonshire's failure to capitalise on it after winning the toss was the key to their downfall. Leicestershire certainly bowled fast and straight on it, but at least Alan Mullally who found that off-stump line which has batsmen uncertain whether to play at him or leave well alone. Once Mal Loye had gone first ball, choosing the first option, Northamptonshire were always on the backfoot.

They could scarcely claim they were unlucky except perhaps David Capel, who was given out lbw to a ball he was aiming to glance from around leg stump. But he would be wise not to make a habit of hanging around as long as he did here once the umpire's decision has been clearly given.

Sporting Digest

Athletics

Spain's Ferrn Cascho, the world champion 1500m silver medalist and European 1500m record holder, said yesterday that he will return to competition in a road race in Madrid on 15 May. Cascho injured an ankle while weight training in November and was unable to run for two months.

Next week's IAAF Grand Prix meeting in Jakarta, scheduled for 16 May, has been called off because of Indonesia's economic crisis, the organizers announced yesterday.

Baseball

AMERICAN LEAGUE: Boston 4 Milwaukee 2 (10 innings); Houston 3 Cincinnati 2; Colorado 6 Philadelphia 1; Pittsburgh 5 St. Louis 2; Atlanta 8 Los Angeles 5; New York Yankees 9 Arizona 1; Houston 10 Chicago 6; St. Diego 3 Milwaukee 4.

NBA CONFERENCE PLAY-OFFS (best of seven series): Indiana 90 New York 88; Detroit 94 San Antonio 82; Utah 88 San Antonio 85 (last series 1-0).

Baseball

WATERLOO LADIES Pairs: Final day of the 1998 World Cup. The British Rovers forward Jamie Curston suffered a hairline fracture of his left leg against Brentford last Saturday and will miss the Second Division promotion play-off.

Aston Villa are considering signing the Australian international left-back Danny Tiatto, 24, who has spent the last six months on loan at Stoke City from his Swiss club, Basel. Middlesbrough have said that all of their Second Division home games next season will be all-ticket.

The South Korean government has decided to go ahead with a new stadium for the 2002 World Cup finals. Government departments involved in preparations met to decide whether to build a new stadium or save money by renovating Seoul's Jamsil stadium.

The former Germany goalkeeper Harald Schumacher, who earned reputation for his foul on France's Patrick Battiston at the 1992 World Cup, has been

Football

The Middlesbrough manager, Bryan Robson, will play in Chris Wadsworth's testimonial against Nottingham Forest at the Riverside Stadium on Friday. The 40-year-old Robson, who has not played for 300 since a 2-0 defeat at Arsenal on New Year's Day 1997.

Coventry's former FA Cup-winning captain Brian Klavin was yesterday one of the fastest England players not to play for 300 since a 2-0 defeat at Arsenal on New Year's Day 1997.

Southern Hemisphere given a free transfer to the third choice goalkeeper Daryl Fife, who is having trouble at his club, the Scottish League's Dundee United, has been offered a place in the Scotland squad.

Jimmy Floyd Haskett has been named Player of the Year in his first season in English football. The 27-year-old striker has scored 22 goals in all competitions for Leeds and is in contention for a place in the World Cup squad.

Northamptonshire's Darren Maddy and Iain Sutherland were yesterday named in the England squad for the World Cup.

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Rallying

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP Group D: Latvia 7 Kazakhstan 2 (in Rally). Group C: Sweden 6 United States 1 (in Zurich).

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Swimming

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Cricket scoreboard

Benson & Hedges Cup

One-day matches
Durham v Scotland
Durham beat Scotland by two wickets.

Scotland won toss
Scotland: 1-23, 2-34, 3-44, 4-54, 5-64, 6-74, 7-84, 8-94, 9-104, 10-114, 11-124, 12-134, 13-144, 14-154, 15-164, 16-174, 17-184, 18-194, 19-204, 20-214, 21-224, 22-234, 23-244, 24-254, 25-264, 26-274, 27-284, 28-294, 29-304, 30-314, 31-324, 32-334, 33-344, 34-354, 35-364, 36-374, 37-384, 38-394, 39-404, 40-414, 41-424, 42-434, 43-444, 44-454, 45-464, 46-474, 47-484, 48-494, 49-504, 50-514, 51-524, 52-534, 53-544, 54-554, 55-564, 56-574, 57-584, 58-594, 59-604, 60-614, 61-624, 62-634, 63-644, 64-654, 65-664, 66-674, 67-684, 68-694, 69-704, 70-714, 71-724, 72-734, 73-744, 74-754, 75-764, 76-774, 77-784, 78-794, 79-804, 80-814, 81-824, 82-834, 83-844, 84-854, 85-864, 86-874, 87-884, 88-894, 89-904, 90-914, 91-924, 92-934, 93-944, 94-954, 95-964, 96-974, 97-984, 98-994, 99-1004, 100-1014, 101-1024, 102-1034, 103-1044, 104-1054, 105-1064, 106-1074, 107-1084, 108-1094, 109-1104, 110-1114, 111-1124, 112-1134, 113-1144, 114-1154, 115-1164, 116-1174, 117-1184, 118-1194, 119-1204, 120-1214, 121-1224, 122-1234, 123-1244, 124-1254, 125-1264, 126-1274, 127-1284, 128-1294, 129-1304, 130-1314, 131-1324, 132-1334, 133-1344, 134-1354, 135-1364, 136-1374, 137-1384, 138-1394, 139-1404, 140-1414, 141-1424, 142-1434, 143-1444, 144-1454, 145-1464, 146-1474, 147-1484, 148-1494, 149-1504, 150-1514, 151-1524, 152-1534, 153-1544, 154-1554, 155-1564, 156-1574, 157-1584, 158-1594, 159-1604, 160-1614, 161-1624, 162-1634, 163-1644, 164-1654, 165-1664, 166-1674, 167-1684, 168-1694, 169-1704, 170-1714, 171-1724, 172-1734, 173-1744, 174-1754, 175-1764, 176-1774, 177-1784, 178-1794, 179-1804, 180-1814, 181-1824, 182-1834, 183-1844, 184-1854, 185-1864, 186-1874, 187-1884, 188-1894, 189-1904, 190-1914, 191-1924, 192-1934, 193-1944, 194-1954, 195-1964, 196-1974, 197-1984, 198-1994, 199-2004, 200-2014, 201-2024, 202-2034, 203-2044, 204-2054, 205-2064, 206-2074, 207-2084, 208-2094, 209-2104, 210-2114, 211-2124, 212-2134, 213-2144, 214-2154, 215-2164, 216-2174, 217-2184, 218-2194, 219-2204, 220-2214, 221-2224, 222-2234, 223-2244, 224-2254, 225-2264, 226-2274, 227-2284, 228-2294, 229-2304, 230-2314, 231-2324, 232-2334, 233-2344, 234-2354, 235-2364, 236-2374, 237-2384, 238-2394, 239-2404, 240-2414, 241-2424, 242-2434, 243-2444, 244-2454, 245-2464, 246-2474, 247-2484, 248-2494, 249-2504, 250-2514, 251-2524, 252-2534, 253-2544, 254-2554, 255-2564, 256-2574, 257-2584, 258-2594, 259-2604, 260-2614, 261-2624, 262-2634, 263-2644, 264-2654, 265-

Royle begins overhaul at Maine Road

Football

By Paul Walker

JOE ROYLE and Willie Donachie have committed themselves as Manchester City's managerial team into the next century.

Royle, meanwhile, has already begun making ruthless cuts in the City playing staff - starting with the veteran midfielder Ian Brightwell. The City manager has signed a new three-year deal, adding another 12 months to his existing contract, while his assistant Willie Donachie has agreed a two-year extension to the one-year agreement he already had.

However, while Royle and his No 2 were putting pen to paper, the axe was falling on the players, the biggest shock being the decision not to offer the long-serving Brightwell a new deal.

The goalkeeper Martyn Margetson has also been released, while Craig Russell and Ged Brannan have been put on a transfer list which is set to include players who have cost the club more than £4m in the past three seasons.

Uwe Rösler has already left Maine Road for Kaiserslautern, and the £5m-rated Georgi Kinkladze is on his way to Ajax.

Richard Edgill, another who is out of contract, has signed a new four-year deal, while the teenage striker Leon Mike has also accepted a four-year offer.

Kit Symons' future, though, is in doubt. The defender opened talks with Royle yesterday and will have further discussions later this week. It is believed the new offer to Symons is a massive cut in his current wages. He said: "I have had a chat with the boss, and there has been an offer made - but there is still a lot of talking to do."

For Brightwell, though, it is a sad end to an 18-year association with the club he joined as a 12-year-old. Half-way through his testimonial season, he said: "Joe has told me he can't offer me a new contract because of the financial situation the club is in. I felt sick walking out of his office. I have been at City all those years and never wanted to leave. I was a supporter of the team before I joined as a player, so it is doubly sad."

"I have been told I can still have my testimonial match, hopefully pre-season, but it has knocked me sideways, really. I still believe I can do a good job for a First Division club and could still even play in the Premiership. I will keep all my options open and hope something comes up, but leaving City will take a lot of getting over."

Russell, who joined City in November as part of the £1m swap that took Nicky Summerbee to Sunderland, and Brannan will go on a transfer list that includes many of the dozen players who have been but no loan in recent months, including Martin Phillips, Paul Beesley, Neil Heaney, Rae Ingram, Barry Conlon and Eddie McGoldrick. City also want to sell the likes of Nigel Clough, Scott Hiley, Khakaber Tkhadadze and Murtaz Shelia - when the latter has recovered from a serious knee injury.

Royle is looking to reduce the 50-plus playing staff by more than 20 to cut the current £7m wage bill by half before City embark on their first season of third-grade football. He is determined to drag City back into the big time, and said: "It took Willie and me about two minutes to agree to the extensions. I am very impressed with the club's ambitions and I honestly think we have the basis of a decent side here."

"Our immediate aim is to get back into the First Division, but the long-term plan is to battle back to the Premiership," Royle added. "To be honest, despite relegation, there is a great spirit about the club and a belief in what we are doing."

City's chairman, David Bernstein, said: "We are delighted that Joe and Willie have decided to further commit themselves to the club. They have, as the board do, great confidence in the club. It will take hard work and commitment, but we are united as a team in the quest to deliver the aspirations our fans so richly deserve."

Seven Chelsea first-team players were yesterday still receiving treatment on injuries that are threatening their involvement in Sunday's relegation decider against Bolton at Stamford Bridge.

Just a week before the European Cup-Winners' Cup final against VfB Stuttgart, Frank Leboeuf, Gianfranco Zola, Frank Sinclair, Michael Duberry, Dennis Wise, Graeme Le Saux and Andy Myers are all on the treatment table.

More football, page 28

Muster back on track on the red stuff



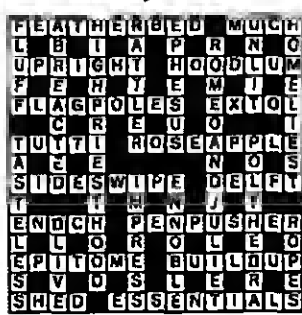
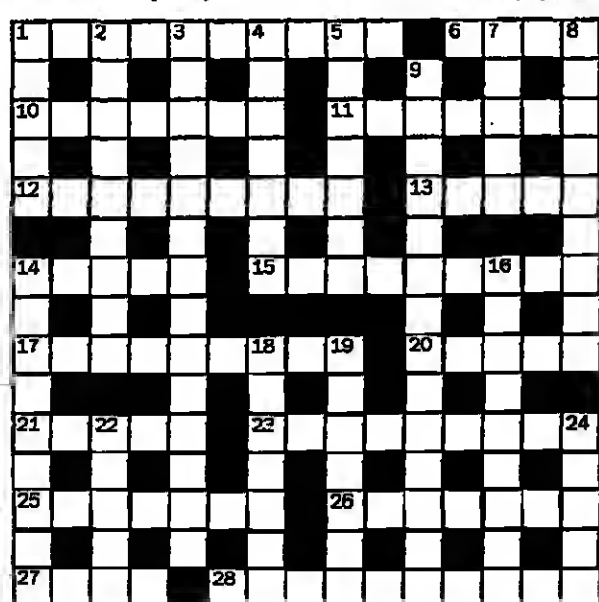
Thomas Muster plays a backhand during his straight-sets win over Yevgeny Kafelnikov at the German Open in Hamburg yesterday. Afterwards the former world No 1 dismissed reports that he was planning to retire. "I want to play for another three years," he said. Report, page 28; Photograph: PA

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3604, Thursday 7 May

By Sparrow

Wednesday's solution



- ACROSS**
- Hard hat needed when he's delivering! (4,6)
 - Those foremost in welfare administration providing for lost child (4)
 - Tort was remedied by a sort of accommodation (3,4)
 - Fatty ingredients in soap I'd analysed finally detectable (7)
 - Several divers? (9)
 - Aim to catch large animals, primarily antelope (5)
 - Colloquial term for food evokes mockery (5)
 - Painter associated with last mouth's speaker (9)
 - Visual aid with no need for aural support (9)
 - Standard Civil Service reaction - to produce paper none wants (5)
 - Social group makes patient tense inside (5)

- Key left in custody of chap in Information Technology (9)
 - Head's article taken from Prometheus Unbound (7)
 - A plover flying for cover, partially? (7)
 - South American lieutenant, naval man (4)
 - Character one caught near centre of Rhyol travelling very fast? (10)
- DOWN**
- Corrupt journalist is marked down (5)
 - Grass surface provided for workforce (4,5)
 - Unable to catch Billy, reportedly identified as culprit? (6-8)
 - Outmoded defence containing high explosive, atomic? (7)

- White wine served in the Spanish college is somewhat variable (7)
- Bouquet sent up by innamorata? (5)
- Practical instruction for pupils as horses fall (5,4)
- Prefers servile treatment in clubs? (4,10)
- Errors in only written document to include former Soviet republics (9)
- Waterproof cover boy's left in train, unfortunately (9)
- Play with two others, perhaps, in attempt to secure individual record? (7)
- Old tramp initially expected to blow his top? (7)
- Part of flower originally pressed in wax, perhaps (5)
- Subject featured in Canaletto picture (5)

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French lottery cuts red tape for British fencer

Sports funding

By Mike Rowbottom

THE nation's best fencer, Ian Williams, has found a way of avoiding problems of gaining National Lottery funding which afflicted so many elite British performers. He has found support from the French Lottery system.

Williams, who competes for Britain and took part in last year's World Championships, has fenced for the last two seasons with clubs based in Paris which are subsidised from the

French lottery funds. His French club pays for him to represent Britain in World Cup events.

That is a benefit which continues to elude Williams' British-based colleague, James Williams (no relation). James, who reached the last 32 of the sabre event at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, before losing to the silver medalist, has seen his hopes of funding delayed by bureaucracy. While other fencers in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have been paid directly by their national sports councils, James has had to wait for his

funding through the performance plan submitted by the British Fencing Association. That plan has been rejected by the UK Sports Council, and an application for an interim grant is, in James's words, "in the pipeline". No decision is expected until August, by which time James needs to be in Malaysia for the Commonwealth Games.

James was only able to attend a recent World Cup event in Greece through a £500 grant from his local council in Gillingham. It is the largest amount of funding he has had in a year.

While he can only wait and hope, so too must the British hobsleighters who won an Olympic bronze medal in Nagano two months ago. Sean Olsson, who steered the four man bob to Britain's first Winter Olympic medal since 1964 spoke yesterday of his frustration on learning that their success did not guarantee a continuing flow of National Lottery funding.

Last year's funding delays meant, Olsson estimates, that each member had had to find around £5,000 to subsidise living and travel expenses. Once again this year, no funding is expected until September.

"It's all red tape," said Olsson, a para-athlete based in Aldershot. "There has been no continuity. As far as I'm concerned we had fulfilled our end of the bargain by coming home with a medal."

Apart from financing trips to Gibraltar and Calgary, where the team spent a month last year, there are more mundane costs - petrol money for trips to their only training venue in Britain, a rusting push-start run on waste ground at the back of the Thorpe Park amusements in Surrey.

